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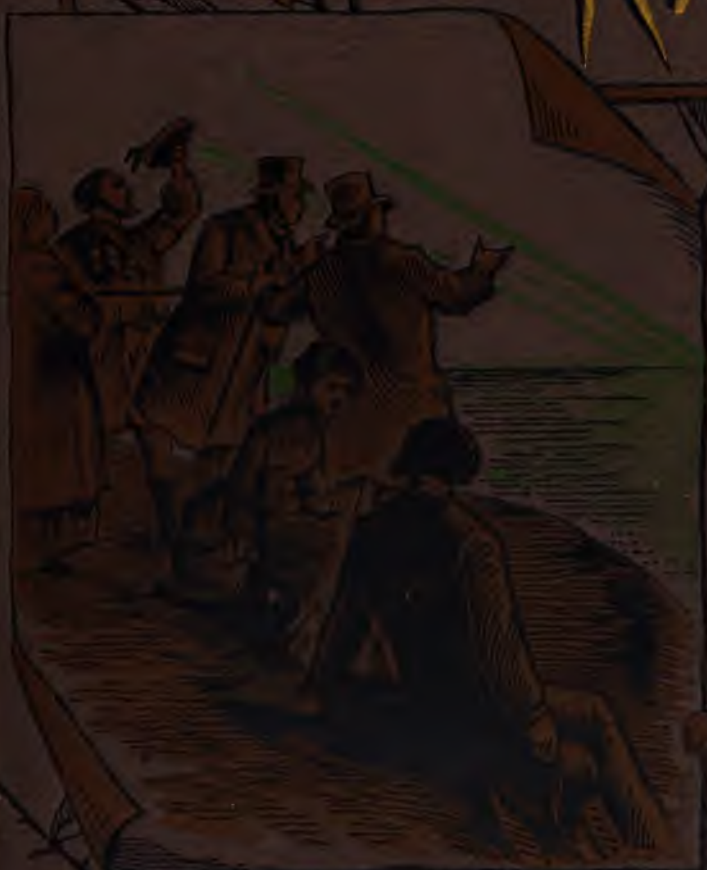
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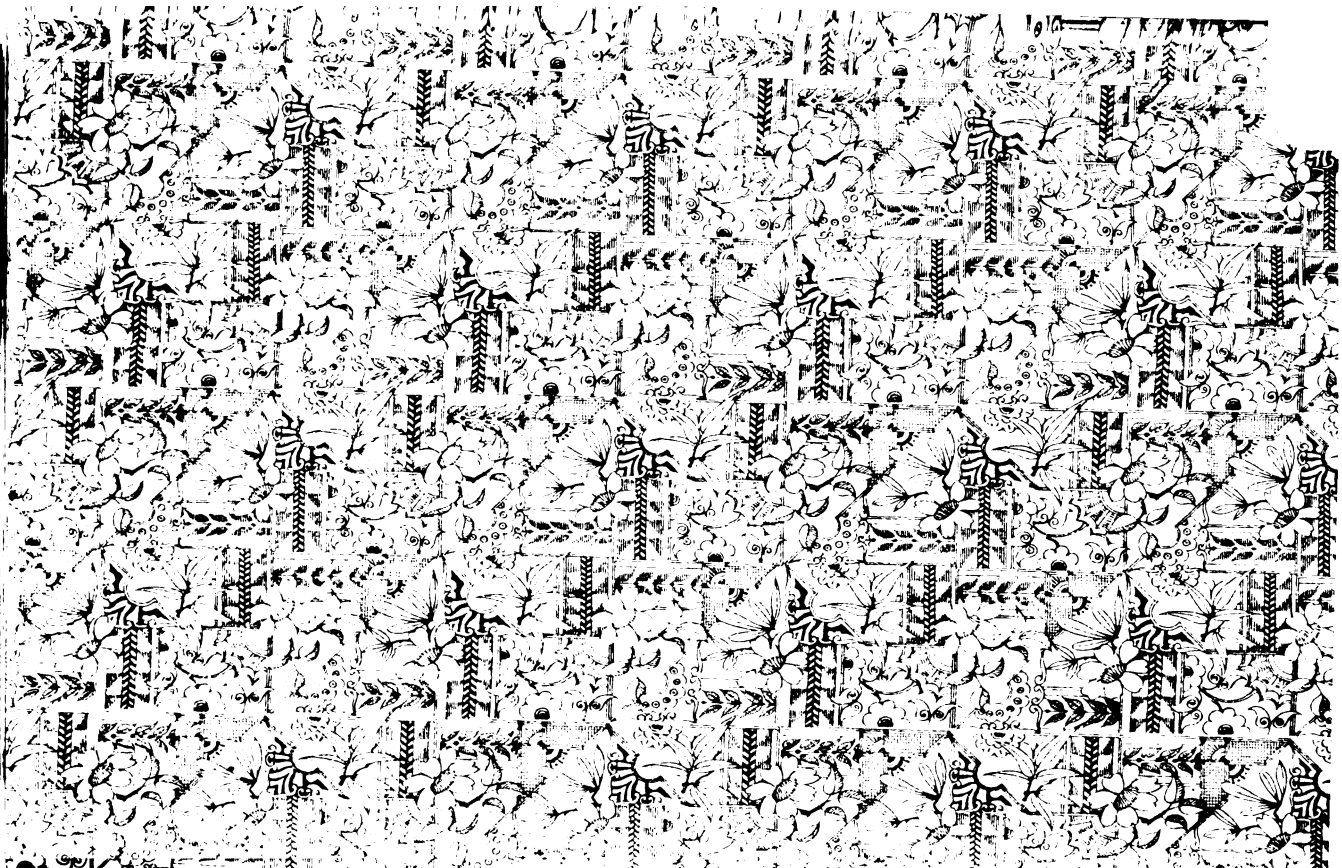
THE GREEN RAY

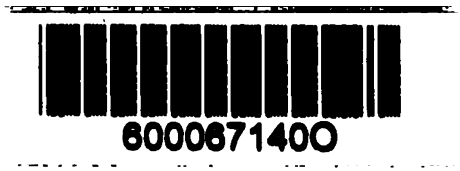


BY

JULES VERNE

ILLUSTRATED




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THE GREEN RAY.

By JULES VERNE.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH BY
MARY DE HAUTEVILLE.



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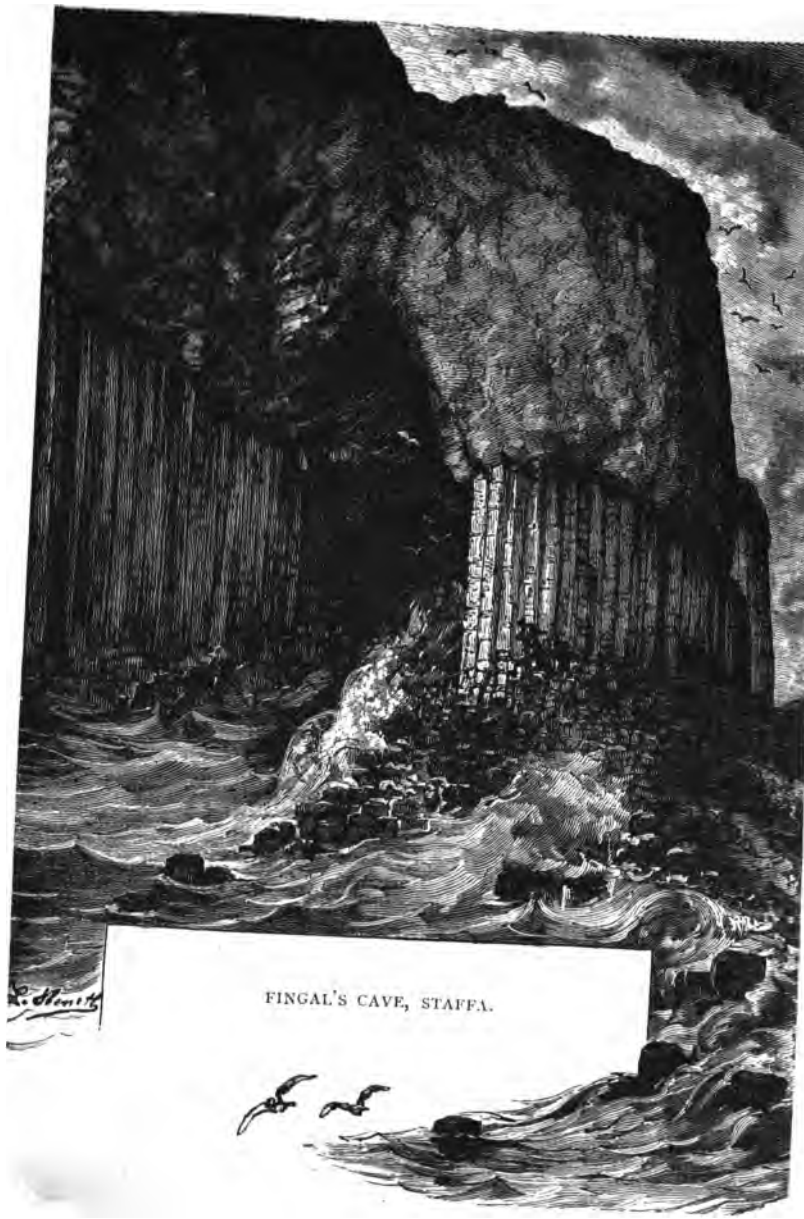
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THE GREEN RAY.

45



FINGAL'S CAVE, STAFFA.

THE GREEN RAY.

CHAPTER I.

THE BROTHERS SAM AND SIB.

"BETTY!"

"Bess!"

"Betsey!"

One after another these names re-echoed through the hall of Helensburgh; it was the way the brothers Sam and Sib had of summoning their housekeeper.

But just now these diminutives had no more power of bringing forth the worthy dame than if her masters had bestowed on her her rightful title.

It was Partridge the factor, who, with his hat in his hand, made his appearance at the hall-door.

Addressing the two goodnatured-looking gentlemen seated in the embrasure of a bow-window in the front of the house, he said,—

"You were calling Dame Bess, masters, but she is not in the house."

"Where is she, then, Partridge?"

"She has gone out with Miss Campbell for a walk in the park."

Then, at a sign from his masters, Partridge gravely retired.

These gentlemen were the brothers Sam and Sib—christened Samuel and Sebastian—Miss Campbell's uncles, Scotchmen of the old school, and of an ancient Highland clan; they reckoned a hundred and twelve years between them, with only fifteen months' difference in age, Sam the elder, and Sib the younger.

To give a slight sketch of these paragons of honour, benevolence, and unselfishness, it need but be said that their whole lives had been consecrated to their niece. Her mother, their only sister, was left a widow a year after her marriage, and survived her husband a very short time. Sam and Sib were thus left sole guardians of the little orphan, who very soon became the one object of their thoughts and mutual affection.

For her sake they remained celibates, being of that number of estimable persons whose earthly career is one long course of self-denial. And does it not say much

for them when the elder brother constituted himself father, and the younger one mother to the child, so that it came quite naturally to Helena to address them with,—

"Good morning, Papa Sam. How are you, Mamma Sib?"

And to whom can they better be compared, though not business-men, than to those two charitable merchants, so generous, united, and affectionate, the brothers Cheeryble, of London, the most worthy characters that ever emanated from the imagination of Dickens? It seems impossible to find a more exact likeness, and should the author be accused of borrowing their type from that *chef-d'œuvre* "Nicholas Nickleby," no one can for a moment regret such an appropriation.

Sam and Sib Melville were united by their sister's marriage to the ancient family of Campbell.

They had been to the same college and sat in the same class, thus their ideas of things in general were much alike, and they expressed them in almost identical terms; the one could always finish the other's sentence with similar expressions and gestures. In short, these two beings might have been one, save for some slight difference in their physical constitutions; Sam was a little taller than Sib, and Sib a little stouter than Sam. They might easily have exchanged their grey

hair without altering the character of their honest faces, stamped with the nobility of the descendants of the clan Melville.

Need it be added that in the cut of their clothes and the choice of the cloth their tastes were alike, except that—how can this slight difference be accounted for? —except that Sam seemed to prefer dark blue and Sib dark maroon.

In truth, who would not have been glad to know these two worthy gentlemen? Accustomed to tread the same path through life, most probably they would not be far apart when the final halt should come. These last pillars of the house of Melville were solid, and might for a long while yet support the old edifice of their race, which dated back as far as the fourteenth century—from the time of Robert Bruce and Wallace, that heroic period during which Scotland disputed her right of independence with England.

But because Sam and Sib Melville had no longer occasion to fight for the welfare of their country, because their lives were passed in the ease and affluence which fortune had bestowed upon them, they are not to be reproached with it, nor must it be thought that they had degenerated, for their benevolence alone carried out the generous traditions of their ancestors.

Now each of them enjoying good health, and without

a single irregularity in their lives to reproach themselves with, were destined to become aged without growing old either in body or mind.

Perhaps they had one failing—who can boast of being perfect? This was a habit of embellishing their conversation with quotations borrowed from the celebrated master of Abbotsford, and more especially from the epic poems of Ossian, which they doted upon. But who could blame them for it in this land of Walter Scott and Fingal?

To put a finishing-stroke to the sketch, it must be remarked that they were great snuff-takers. Now every one knows that the sign of a tobacconist's shop all over the United Kingdom is more often than not a valiant Scotchman with a snuff-box in his hand, parading himself in his national costume. Very well, then, the brothers Melville might advantageously have figured as these signs, posted up over the shop windows. They took as much snuff, if not more than any one living north or south of the Tweed. But now for a characteristic detail, they had but one snuff-box between them—and an enormous one it was! This portable piece of furniture was continually being passed from one brother's pocket to the other's; it was a kind of link between them. As a matter of course, they both felt a desire to inhale the excellent narcotic powder at

the same moment, were it ten times an hour. When one drew the snuff-box from the depths of his pocket, they were both ready for a good pinch; and if they sneezed, they did not forget the customary "God bless you!"

In short, these brothers were mere children in all that concerned the realities of life; knowing little enough of the practical things of this world, and of business affairs, either commercial or financial, absolutely nothing, nor did they make any pretence to such knowledge; in politics they were perhaps Jacobites at heart, still retaining some of the old prejudice against the reigning house of Hanover, dreaming perhaps of the last of the Stuarts, as a Frenchman might of the last of the Valois; in matters of sentiment they were still less learned.

The brothers had but one object in life, and that was to divine their niece's thoughts and wishes, to direct them aright, if necessary, and to develop them; finally, to marry her to an excellent young man of their choice, who could not do otherwise than make her happy.

So they thought—or rather to hear them speak, one might have supposed that they had found the very man on whom must devolve this agreeable duty.

"So Helena has gone out, Sib?"

"Yes, but it is just five o'clock, and it will not be long before she is home."

"And when she comes in—"

"I think, Sam, it would be as well to have a serious talk with her."

"In a few weeks the child will be eighteen."

"The same age as Diana Vernon, Sam. Is she not just as charming as that adorable heroine of 'Rob Roy'?"

"Yes, with her attractive ways—"

"Her bright intellect—"

"The originality of her ideas—"

"She reminds one more of Diana Vernon than of Flora MacIvor, the grand and stately heroine of 'Waverley'!"

The brothers, proud of their national author, mentioned the names of several other heroines from the "Antiquary," "Guy Mannering," "The Fair Maid of Perth," &c., but all to their thinking must yield the palm to Miss Campbell.

"It is a young rose-tree which has bloomed rather early, brother Sib, and which needs but—"

"A support. Now, I am tired of saying that the best support must be—"

"Must be a husband, decidedly; for he, like the prop, takes root in the same soil—"

"And naturally grows with the rose-tree which he protects."

Between them the brothers had borrowed this metaphor

from the "Complete Gardener." Undoubtedly they were satisfied with it, for it brought a contented smile on each honest face. Sib opened the mutual snuff-box, daintily put in his fingers and then passed it to his brother, who, after taking a large pinch, deposited it in his pocket.

"So we are quite agreed, Sam."

"As usual, Sib."

"Even to the choice of the gardener?"

"How could any one be found more sympathetic, or likely to suit Helena, than this young *savant* who on several occasions has evinced sentiments so honourable—"

"And so sincere on his part—"

"It would be difficult indeed. He is well educated, a graduate of the universities of Oxford and Edinburgh—"

"A physicist like Tyndall—"

"A chemist like Faraday—"

"Thoroughly conversant in every subject—"

"And no matter what question you put to him, never at a loss for an answer—"

"Descended from an excellent Fifeshire family, and, besides, heir to an ample fortune—"

"Without taking into account his very agreeable personal appearance, at least to my thinking, even with his aluminium spectacles!"



Sib opened the mutual snuff-box.

Page 10.

Had the spectacles been of steel, nickel, or even of gold, the brothers would never have regarded them as a latent defect. 'Tis true these optical appendages suit young *savants*, and give an air of discretion highly appropriate.

But was this graduate of the above-mentioned universities, this physicist and chemist, agreeable to Miss Campbell? If Miss Campbell were indeed like Diana Vernon, Diana Vernon, one knows, had no feelings beyond a very reserved friendship for her learned cousin Rashleigh, and never married him to the end of the story.

Good! but that need not make the brothers uneasy, and they brought all the experience of two old bachelors to bear upon the subject.

"They have met already once or twice, Sib, and our young friend did not seem insensible to Helena's beauty."

"I should think not, indeed! If the divine Ossian had to celebrate her virtues, beauty, and grace, he would have called her Moina, that is to say, beloved of all—"

"Unless he had named her Fiona, Sib, the incomparable beauty of the Gaelic epoch!"

"Did he not picture our Helena when he wrote:—

"'She left the hall of her secret sigh! She came in all her beauty, like the moon from the cloud of the east—'"

"'Loveliness was around her as light. Her steps were the music of songs.'"

Happily, the brothers here ended their quotations, and fell from the somewhat misty regions of the poets into the realms of reality.

"Surely," said the one, "if Helena pleases our young *savant*, he cannot fail to please—"

"And if, on her part, Sam, she has not given as much attention as is due to the great qualities with which he is so liberally endowed by nature—"

"It is simply because we have not yet told her it is time to think of getting married."

"But when once we have turned her thoughts that way, whilst admitting that she may have some objection, if not to the husband, at least to matrimony—"

"She will not be long in giving her consent, Sam—"

"Like the excellent Benedick, who, after resisting for a long while—"

"Ended, at the conclusion of 'Much Ado about Nothing,' by marrying Beatrice."

This was how Miss Campbell's uncles arranged affairs, and the *dénouement* of their plan seemed to them as simple as that of Shakspere's comedy.

They rose with one accord, smiled knowingly at each other, and gleefully rubbed their hands. This marriage was a settled affair! What difficulty could arise? The

young man had as good as asked their consent, the young girl would give her reply, as to which they need not trouble themselves for a moment. Everything was most desirable, and only the day remained to be fixed.

Indeed it should be a fine ceremony; it should take place at Glasgow, certainly not in the cathedral of St. Mungo, the only church in Scotland, except that of St. Magnus, that had been respected at the time of the Reformation. No! it was too large, and consequently too gloomy for a wedding which, according to the brothers' ideas, should be a brilliant display of youth, a beam of love! They would rather choose St. Andrew's, or St. Enoch's, or even St. George's, in the best part of the city.

The brothers went on developing their plans rather in the form of a monologue than a dialogue, for it was always the same train of ideas, expressed in the same way. As they talked they had before them a view of the beautiful trees in the park, where Miss Campbell was now walking, and the grassy slopes through which wound a bright stream, while overhead the sky was shrouded with a slight mist, which seems peculiar to the Highlands of Scotland. They did not look at each other, there was no need for it; but from time to time they grasped each other's hands, as though to keep up

a communication of thought by means of some magnetic current.

Yes! it should be magnificent! They would do the thing handsomely. The poor of West George Street, if there were any—and where are they not to be found?—should not be forgotten on this joyful occasion. If by chance Miss Campbell should wish that it might take place very quietly, and insisted on her uncles listening to her, they would know how to be firm with her for the first time in their lives; they would not yield on this point, nor any other. The guests at the bridal feast should quaff wine to their hearts' content, but with all due ceremony; and Sam's hand was held out simultaneously with Sib's, as though they were already exchanging the famous Scotch toast.

At this moment the hall-door was opened, and a young girl, with cheeks glowing with health after her rapid walk, appeared. In her hand she held a newspaper, and going up to the brothers, she honoured them with two kisses each.

"Good-morning Uncle Sam," said she.

"Good-morning, dear child."

"And how is Uncle Sib?"

"Wonderfully well, thank you, my dear."

"Helena," said Sam, "we have a little arrangement to make with you."



A young girl appeared.



"An arrangement! what arrangement? What have you two uncles been plotting together?" asked Miss Campbell, as she looked roguishly from one to the other.

"You know that young gentleman, Mr. Aristobulus Ursiclos?"

"Yes, I know him."

"Do you like him?"

"Why should I not like him, uncle?"

"Well, after mature consideration, brother and I think of proposing him to you as a husband."

"I marry? I!" exclaimed Miss Campbell, and her pretty lips parted with the most musical laughter that had ever resounded through the great hall.

"Do you not want to be married?" asked her Uncle Sam.

"Why should I?"

"Never?" inquired Sib.

"Never!" replied Miss Campbell, assuming a serious air, which her smiling lips quite contradicted. "Never, uncles—at least, not till I have seen—"

"Seen what?" cried the brothers.

"Until I have seen the Green Ray."

CHAPTER II.

HELENA CAMPBELL.

THE house occupied by the uncles and their niece was situated three miles from the little hamlet of Helensburgh, on the banks of Gare Loch, one of the most picturesque lakes which capriciously indent the right bank of the Clyde.

During the winter they lived in Glasgow, at an old mansion in West George Street, in the most aristocratic part of the new town, not far from Blythswood Square. There they stayed for six months in the year, unless some whim of Helena's, to which they yielded without a murmur, took them off for a visit to Italy, Spain, or France. In the course of these travels they saw everything from their niece's point of view, going where she liked, stopping where it pleased her to stop, and admiring nothing but what she admired. Then, when Miss Campbell closed the book in which she jotted down her impressions of the journey, they quietly returned to

Scotland, and very willingly resumed their comfortable quarters in West George Street.

About the third week in May the brothers generally experienced a great desire to be back in the country, and this happened just as Helena showed the same inclination to leave the noise of Glasgow, and fly from the hubbub of business, which sometimes inundated even the neighbourhood of Blythswood Square, to breathe a purer atmosphere than that of the commercial city.

Thus the whole household, masters and servants, set out for the country house about twenty miles distant.

The village of Helensburgh is a pretty little place, and has become a much frequented bathing-resort by those who are at leisure to vary excursions up the Clyde with tours to Loch Katrine and Loch Lomond.

The brothers had chosen the best place possible for their house, about a mile from the shores of Gare Loch, surrounded by magnificent trees, near a stream, and standing on undulating ground which had all the appearance of a private park. Cool, shady retreats, grassy slopes, clumps of trees, flower-beds, pastures kept especially for sheep, silvery lakes adorned with swans, those graceful birds of whom Wordsworth writes,—

"The swan floats double—swan and shadow."

Finally, everything that nature could unite to gladden

the eyes without betraying the handiwork of man. Such was the summer residence of this wealthy family.

It may be added that from one part of the park, lying above Gare Loch, the view is charming. Beyond the narrow gulf on the right the eye rests on the peninsula of Roseneath, on which stands a pretty Italian villa, belonging to the Duke of Argyll; to the left lies the little hamlet of Helensburgh, with its undulating line of houses along the coast, and here and there the spire of a church; its elegant pier running out into the waters of the lake for the service of steamers, and its background of hills enlivened with picturesque villas. Facing you on the left bank of the Clyde, Port Glasgow, the ruins of Newark Castle, Greenock and its forest of masts, decorated with many-coloured flags, form a very varied panorama, from which it is difficult to turn away.

From the top of the principal tower of the house, the view was more beautiful still, with a glimpse of two horizons.

The square tower, with pepper-boxes standing out airily from three angles of its summit, ornamented with battlements, and its parapet girt with stone lace-work, rose still higher at its fourth angle in an octagonal turret, with an inevitable flag-staff. This keep of modern construction thus overlooked the whole of the building



The Hall of Helensburgh.

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proper with its irregular roofing, its windows capriciously placed here and there, and its numerous gables and chimneys.

Now it was on this highest platform of the turret, beneath the national colours floating in the breeze, that Miss Campbell loved to sit and dream for whole hours together. She had made it a cosy little place of refuge, where she could read, write, or sleep at any time, sheltered from the sun, wind, and rain. Here she was most often to be found; and if not here, she was wandering through the park, sometimes alone, sometimes accompanied by Dame Bess, unless she were riding her favourite little horse over the neighbouring country, followed by the faithful Partridge, who had to urge on his steed in order to keep up with his young mistress.

Among the numerous domestics, we must single out these two honest servants, who, from their childhood, had been attached to the Campbell family.

Elizabeth, the "Luckie," as they call a housekeeper in the Highlands, could count as many years as she had keys on her bunch, and they were no less than forty-seven. She was a thorough manager: serious, orderly, skilful, superintending the whole household. Perhaps she imagined that she had reared the two brothers, although they were older than herself, but most certainly she had bestowed maternal care on Miss Campbell.

Next to this valuable stewardess figured Partridge, a servant entirely devoted to his masters, always faithful to the time-honoured customs of his clan, and invariably dressed in Highland costume.

With an Elizabeth to manage the household and a Partridge to look after it, what more could be wanted to ensure domestic felicity?

It has doubtless been remarked that when Partridge answered the brothers' call he had spoken of their niece as Miss Campbell.

Had the Scotchman given her her baptismal name, and called her Miss Helena, he would have committed an infraction of Highland etiquette; never indeed is the eldest or the only daughter of good family called by her Christian name. If Miss Campbell had been the daughter of a peer, she would have been called Lady Helena. Now this branch of the Campbells to which she belonged was only collateral and but distantly connected with the direct branch of the Campbells whose origin goes back to the Crusades. For many centuries branches from the old tree had been separated from the direct line of the glorious ancestor now represented by the clans of Argyll and Breadalbane; but however distant the connexion might be, Helena, on her father's side, had some of the blood of this illustrious family in her veins.



Miss Campbell, followed by the faithful Partridge.

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Still, though she was but Miss Campbell, she was a true Scotchwoman, one of those noble daughters of Thulé, with blue eyes and fair hair, whose portrait, engraved by Finden or Edwards, and placed among the Minnas, Brendas, Amy Robsarts, Flora MacIvors, Diana Vernons, would have held its own in those "keepsakes" in which the English used to gather the feminine beauty of this great novelist.

Miss Campbell was indeed very charming, with her pretty face, blue eyes, blue as her native lakes, her elegant figure, and somewhat haughty demeanour, her dreamy expression, except when a gleam of humour animated her features, her whole person, in fact, so graceful and *distingué*.

Helena was good as well as beautiful. Heiress to her uncles' wealth, she was not vain of riches, but by her charity endeavoured to verify the old Gaelic proverb, "May the hand which opens freely be always full!"

Attached above everything to her country, her clan, and her family, she was a true Scotchwoman, heart and soul, and would have given the preference to the most consummate Sawney over the most imposing of John Bulls. Her patriotic being thrilled like the strings of a harp when the voice of a mountaineer, singing some Highland pibroch, reached her across the country.

De Maistre has said, "There are in me two beings: myself and another."

The "myself" of Miss Campbell was a serious, reflecting being, looking upon life from the point of view of its duties rather than its rights.

The "other" was a romantic being, somewhat prone to superstition, fond of the marvellous tales which spring up so naturally in the land of Fingal; following the example of the Lindamiras, those adorable heroines of chivalrous romance, she would visit the neighbouring glens to listen to the "bagpipes of Strathearne," as the Highlanders call the wind when it whistles through the lonely alleys.

The brothers loved Miss Campbell's two personalities equally well, but it must be confessed that if the first charmed them by her good sense, the second occasionally embarrassed them with her unexpected remarks, her capricious flights of imagination, and her sudden excursions into dream-land.

Had she not just now given them a most singular answer?

"I marry?" had said the one being. "Marry Mr. Ursiclos? We shall see about that; we will talk about it another time."

"Never! until I have seen the Green Ray!" the other had replied.

The brothers looked at each other, without being able to understand, whilst Miss Campbell installed herself in a large Gothic armchair in the recess of the window.

"What does she mean by the Green Ray?" asked Sam.

"And why does she want to see this ray?" said Sib.

Why? We are about to hear.

CHAPTER III.

THE ARTICLE IN THE "MORNING POST."

LOVERS of physical curiosities might have read in that day's *Morning Post*:—

"Have you sometimes observed the sun set over the sea? Have you watched it till the upper rim of its disk, skimming the surface of the water, is just about to disappear? Very likely you have; but did you notice the phenomenon which occurs at the very instant the heavenly body sends forth its last ray, which, if the sky be cloudless, is of unparalleled purity? No, perhaps not. Well, the first time you have the opportunity, and it happens but rarely, of making this observation, it will not be, as one might think, a crimson ray which falls upon the retina of the eye, it will be 'green,' but a most wonderful green, a green which no artist could ever obtain on his palette, a green which neither the varied tints of vegetation nor the shades of the most limpid sea could

ever produce the like! If there be green in Paradise, it cannot but be of this shade, which most surely is the true green of Hope!"

So ran the article in the *Morning Post*, the newspaper which Miss Campbell held in her hand when she entered the hall. This paragraph had simply bewitched her, and with great excitement she read to her uncles these few hurried lines, which sang the praises of the Green Ray in a somewhat lyric form.

But what Miss Campbell did not tell them was that this Green Ray tallied with an ancient legend, which till now she had never been able to understand. It was one among the numerous inexplicable legends of the Highlands, which avers that this ray has the virtue of making him who has seen it impossible to be deceived in matters of sentiment; at its apparition all deceit and falsehood are done away, and he who has been fortunate enough once to behold it is enabled to see closely into his own heart and read the thoughts of others.

A young Scotchwoman of the Highlands must be pardoned for a romantic credulity which this article in the *Morning Post* had just revived.

Sam and Sib looked at each other with blank astonishment, as Miss Campbell read. They had lived till now without seeing the Green Ray, and imagined it was quite possible to exist without ever doing so. How-

ever, it seemed that this was not Helena's opinion, who intended to make the most important action of her life subordinate to the observation of this unique phenomenon.

"Ah! and is that what is meant by the Green Ray?" said her uncle Sam, gently nodding his head.

"Yes," replied Miss Campbell.

"And do you really want to see it?" said Sib.

"I will see it with your permission, uncles, and as soon as possible, with all due deference to you."

"And then when you have seen it—?"

"When I have seen it, we can talk of Mr. Aristobulus Ursiclos."

The brothers exchanged a knowing glance.

"Then let us go and see this Green Ray," said one.

"Without losing a moment!" added the other.

Miss Campbell stopped them just as they were about to open the hall window.

"We must wait till the sun sets," said she.

"This evening then—" said Sam.

"Should the sun set on a clear horizon," added Miss Campbell.

"Very well, after dinner we will all three go to Roseneath Point—" said Sib.

"Or else we might simply go on to the tower," added Sam.

"We can only see the coast of the Clyde from Roseneath Point, or from the tower," replied Miss Campbell; "and, remember, we must see the sun set on the sea-line, so take my advice, uncles, and let me see that horizon as quickly as possible."

Miss Campbell spoke so seriously, and smiled at them so prettily, that the brothers could not refuse a proposition made in such terms.

"Perhaps there is no immediate hurry—?" Sam, however, thought fit to observe.

And Sib came to his assistance, adding,—

"We have plenty of time—"

Miss Campbell shook her head prettily.

"There is not plenty of time," she replied, "and this, on the contrary, is most urgent."

"On account of Mr. Aristobulus Ursiclos—" said Sam.

"Whose happiness, it seems, depends upon your seeing the Green Ray, and—" continued Sib.

"No, simply because we are already in the month of August, and it will not be long before our Scotch skies are hidden by fogs! We must take advantage of the fine evenings still left us! When shall we go?"

It was very certain Miss Campbell was determined to see the Green Ray that year, and there was no time to be lost. What they had to do was to go at once to some

place on the Scotch coast facing the west, to settle down there as comfortably as possible, to see the sun set every evening and to watch for its last ray, without a day's delay. Perhaps then by some happy chance Miss Campbell would have her whim gratified, should the sky favour the observation, which is a rare occurrence—as the *Morning Post* justly remarked.

And this well-informed journal was quite right.

First of all they must choose some place on the western coast, where the phenomenon would be likely to be visible. Now to find that, they would be obliged to go beyond the Frith of Clyde.

In fact, the whole expanse of the Frith is full of obstacles, which limit the range of view. These are the Kyles of Bute, the peninsulas of Knapdale and Kintyre, the isles of Arran, Jura, Islay, and a number of rocky islets, which form a kind of archipelago all along the western coast of Argyleshire. It would be impossible to get a glimpse here of the sea-horizon, where one might observe the sunset.

So that if they did not wish to leave Scotland, they must go further north or further south to an open coast, and that before autumn set in.

It mattered very little to Miss Campbell where they went, were it to the coast of Ireland, France, Norway, Spain, or Portugal; she would go to any place wherever

the last ray of the setting sun could be seen, and whether it were convenient to the brothers or not, they would be obliged to follow her.

Both uncles were eager to offer their opinions after having exchanged a shrewd glance.

"Well, dear Helena," said Sam, "nothing can be easier than to satisfy you; let us go to Oban."

"It is very certain no place could be better than Oban," added Sib.

"Oban, let it be," replied Miss Campbell; "but is there a clear sea-horizon at Oban?"

"If there is one anywhere!" said Sam.

"More likely two than one," exclaimed Sib.

"Well, then, let us go!"

"In three days' time," said one uncle.

"In two," said the other, who thought it wise to make this prudent concession.

"No, to-morrow," insisted Miss Campbell, rising from her seat just as the dinner-bell rang.

"To-morrow. Yes. It shall be to-morrow!" assented Sam.

"We only wish we were there now!" put in Sib.

They spoke the truth, but wherefore this haste? Precisely because Aristobulus Ursiclos happened to be staying at Oban, and without being aware of this fact, Miss Campbell would be brought in contact with this

does not entirely satisfy her, she will never marry him. She will say something pretty to her uncles, and give them a kiss, and they will be quite surprised that they ever thought of this suitor for a moment. For my own part, I think very little of him."

"No more than I do, honey."

"Look here, Partridge, Miss Campbell's heart is like this drawer, safely locked, and she only has the key, which she must give up before it can be opened."

"Unless they take it from her!" added Partridge, with an approving smile.

"They will never take it from her, unless she likes," replied Bess; "and may the wind carry my cap to the top of St. Mungo's steeple, if ever our young mistress marries this Mr. Ursiclos!"

"A Southron!" cried Partridge, "who, though he was born in Scotland, has always lived the other side of the Tweed!"

Dame Bess shook her head. These two Highlanders understood each other well. They would hardly allow that the Lowlands were part of old Caledonia. Decidedly they were not in favour of this projected marriage; they hoped Miss Campbell would do better. It might be very suitable; but that did not seem enough to please them.

"After all, Partridge," continued Dame Bess, "the



"Look here, Partridge."

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customs of the old clans were the best, and it's my belief that marriages were happier then than they are now-a-days."

"You never said a truer word in your life, my dear," gravely replied Partridge; "they thought more of the heart, and not so much of the purse in those days. Money, of course, is all very well, but affection is better!"

"Yes, Partridge, and they were careful above everything to know each other well before they married! Do you remember what used to take place at St. Olla's fair at Kirkwall? All the time it lasted, from the beginning of August, the young people coupled off; and these couples were called "brother and sister of the first of August." Brother and sister! Now wasn't that a good way of preparing them for becoming husband and wife? And, upon my word, this is the very day the fair used to open! God grant the old custom may be revived."

"And so say I!" replied Partridge. "If the masters had only met with some nice young ladies in that way, they would never have escaped matrimony, and Miss Campbell would now have two aunts to look after her."

"I quite agree with you, Partridge," said Dame Bess; "but if you could couple off Miss Campbell with Mr. Ursiclos to-day, I'll warrant that in a week's time you would not find them together."

Without dwelling upon the inconveniences which might arise from this familiarity, authorized by the ancient customs of Kirkwall, which have now died out, it must be acknowledged that Dame Bess was perhaps right in her statements. However, Miss Campbell and Arsitobulus Ursiclos were not brother and sister of the first of August, and if their marriage ever took place, they would have no chance of knowing each other as they might have done, had they gone through the test of St. Olla's fair!

Be this as it may, fairs are now held for business and not for match-making. So we must leave Dame Bess and Partridge to their regrets, who lost not a moment while they talked.

The departure was decided on, and the place of resort chosen. The brothers and Miss Campbell would figure the next day under the heading of "Departures and Arrivals" in the fashionable papers, as having left for Oban. But which route were they to take? This matter had now to be arranged.

There are two different ways of going to this little town, which is some distance north-west of Glasgow.

The first is by road. One goes to Bowling, then past Dumbarton, and, skirting Loch Leven, touches at Balloch, the extreme end of Loch Lomond; crossing this most beautiful of the Scotch lakes, with its thirty

isles lying between those historic shores, teeming with memories of MacGregor, MacFarlane, Rob Roy, and Robert Bruce, Dalmally is reached ; from thence, following a road which winds round, and very often half way up the mountain side, overhanging torrents and fords, across the first range of the Grampian Hills, through undulating glens of heather, diversified with firs, oaks, larches, and birches, the wondering tourist at last finds himself at Oban, where the coast is as picturesque as any along the shores of the Atlantic.

It is a charming excursion which every traveller in Scotland has made, or ought to make ; but as for sea-horizon, along this route, there is none ; so when the uncles proposed going this way to Miss Campbell, they met with very little success.

The second route is both by river and sea. To descend the Clyde as far as the gulf to which it gives its name, and sail between the islands and islets which make that curious archipelago look like an enormous skeleton hand spread over part of the ocean, then to reascend the right of this hand as far as Oban, was the one which tempted Miss Campbell most, for whom the beautiful country round Loch Lomond and Loch Katrine had no longer any charms. Besides, through the spaces between the islands, in the distance, there must be glimpses of the sea-horizon. Now, when the sun was

setting during the last hour of the journey, if the horizon were not hidden by fog, might it not be possible to see this Green Ray, which lasted scarcely the fiftieth part of a minute?

"You understand, uncles," said Miss Campbell, "it is for but one moment! So if I see what I want, the journey is at end, and we need not go on to Oban."

This was precisely what the brothers had not bargained for; they had made up their minds to stay some time at Oban, the reason of which we know, and they had no intention of disarranging their plans through a too speedy apparition of the phenomenon.

Nevertheless, as Miss Campbell invariably had her own way, and as she wished to go by the sea route, that way was chosen in preference to the other.

"I wish the Green Ray at Jericho!" said Sam, when Helena had left the room.

"And all who conceived the idea with it," added Sib.



Broomielaw Bridge.

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CHAPTER IV

DOWN THE CLYDE.

VERY early the following day, the 2nd of August, Miss Campbell, accompanied by her uncles, and attended by Partridge and Dame Bess, took the train from Helensburgh. They were obliged to go to Glasgow to take the steamer, as it did not call anywhere along this part of the coast on its way to Oban.

At seven o'clock they reached Glasgow, where a carriage was waiting to take them to Broomielaw Bridge.

There the steamer *Columbia* lay, waiting for her passengers; a dense smoke pouring from her two funnels, and mingling with the thick fog hanging over the Clyde; but those mists were soon dispersed as the sun forced its way through the leaden-coloured clouds, and gave every promise of a fine day.

When their luggage had been put on board, Miss Campbell and her companions immediately embarked.

At this moment the bell summoning all tardy passengers rang out for the third and last time; the engines began to work, the paddle-wheels lashed the yellow water into foam, a shrill whistle sounded, the moorings were loosened, and the *Columbia* sped rapidly away with the tide.

Tourists in the United Kingdom have no cause for complaint, the companies everywhere place magnificent boats at their disposal. There is hardly a piece of water so inconsiderable, a lake so small, or a gulf so unimportant, but what is every day ploughed by fine steam-packets. It is not to be wondered at that the Clyde should be one of the most favoured in this respect. Thus, the whole length of Broomielaw Street, alongside the wharfs of the steamboat quay were numbers of packets, with their paddle-boxes painted the brightest colours, from gold to vermilion, with steam up, ready to set off in all directions.

The *Columbia* was no exception to this rule; she was a fast boat, with long tapering bows, and provided with very powerful engines. In the saloons there was every possible comfort; the upper-deck, sheltered by awnings, under which were placed benches and luxurious seats, formed a delightful terrace, from whence the

passengers could obtain a good view and plenty of fresh air.

There was no lack of tourists; they came from all parts, as many from Scotland as England. August is, *par excellence*, the month for excursions, and those up the Clyde and to the Hebrides are especial favourites. There were entire families, lively maidens, and children already used to the wonders of travelling; always, a plentiful number of clergymen, with high silk hats, long black overcoats, and stand-up collars, with white ties showing above their high waistcoats; then several farmers in Scotch caps, by their somewhat grave demeanour reminding one of the old "Bonnet-lairds" of sixty years ago; and, finally, half-a-dozen foreigners, Germans who lose none of their stolidity even out of Germany, and Frenchmen who still retain their genial amiability even out of France.

If Miss Campbell had been like the greater part of her fellow-countrymen, who religiously kept to the corners they had taken when first coming on board, and never moved from them the whole of the trip, she would have seen no more of the banks of the Clyde than actually passed before her eyes without turning her head. But she preferred to walk up and down from stem to stern of the steamer, looking at the towns, hamlets, and villages thickly scattered along its banks. Thus it was that

the two brothers, who followed her, replying to, approving her observations, and confirming her remarks, were not allowed to take a moment's rest between Glasgow and Oban ; as for that matter, however, they never dreamt of complaining, it was part of their duties of guardianship, which they followed instinctively, exchanging, meanwhile, pinches of snuff which kept them in good humour.

Dame Bess and Partridge, sitting forward, were chatting pleasantly of bygone times, of customs now extinct, and of the old disorganized clans. Ah ! those good old times, where were they now ? In those days the clear horizon of the Clyde was not hidden by dense volumes of smoke from factory chimneys ; its banks did not resound with the dull noise of hammering, and its calm waters were never lashed into foam by some hundreds of steamers.

" That time will return, and perhaps sooner than we think for ! " said Dame Bess, with an air of conviction.

" I hope so," gravely replied Partridge, " and with it we shall see the old customs of our ancestors ! "

Meanwhile, the banks of the Clyde were passing rapidly from stem to stern of the *Columbia*, like a moving panorama. To the right was seen the village of Partick, on the mouth of the Kelvin, and the immense docks, destined for the construction of iron ships, facing those

of Govan, situated on the opposite shore. What noises of hammering, and what volumes of smoke and steam distressed the ears and eyes of Partridge and his companion!

But gradually all this busy din and smoky fog grew less and less. In the place of timber-yards, covered wharfs, tall factory chimneys, gigantic iron scaffoldings, which looked like the cages of a menagerie, now appeared coquettish houses, cottages buried among the trees, and villas of Anglo-Saxon design, scattered over the green hills. Between one town and another there was an uninterrupted succession of houses and country seats. After passing the royal borough of Renfrew, situated on the left bank of the river, were seen the wooded hills of Kilpatrick rising above the village of that name, which no Irishman can pass without betraying himself; for there was born St. Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland.

From a river the Clyde had now become an arm of the sea. Dame Bess and Partridge hailed the ruins of Douglas Castle, which recalls some old memories of Scottish history; but they averted their eyes when they passed the monument raised in honour of Harry Bell, the inventor of the first steamboat whose wheels had disturbed these peaceful waters.

A few miles further on, the tourists, Murray in hand,

beheld the Castle of Dumbarton, standing on a basaltic rock which rises to the height of 500 feet, and the highest point of which still bears the name of Wallace's seat.

At this moment a gentleman standing on the foot-bridge, without being asked, but also without objection from any one, thought it his duty to give a little historical lecture for the benefit of his fellow-travellers. In half an hour's time, no one on board the *Columbia*, unless indeed he were deaf, need be ignorant of the fact that very probably the Romans had fortified Dumbarton; that this historical rock was transformed into a royal fortress at the beginning of the thirteenth century; that by the Act of Union it was privileged as one of the four places in Scotland to remain undismantled; that from this port in 1548, Mary Stuart, whose marriage with Francis II. was about to make her "Queen of a day," left for France; finally, that Napoleon was to have been confined there in 1815, before Castlereagh had resolved to imprison him in St. Helena.

"Very instructive indeed," said Sam.

"Instructive and interesting," replied Sib; "this gentleman deserves our thanks."

In fact, the two brothers had not lost a single word of the lecture, and accordingly thanked the self-improvised professor.



Dumbarton Castle.

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Miss Campbell, absorbed in her own thoughts, had heard nothing of this historical lesson. It had no power, just now, at least, to interest her. She did not even look at the ruins of Cardross Castle, where Robert Bruce died. A sea-horizon was what she vainly sought; but there was no chance of getting one till the *Columbia* had passed this succession of banks, promontories, and hill-sides, which bound the Frith of Clyde. Besides, the steamer was then passing the town of Helensburgh, Port Glasgow, the ruins of Newark Castle, and the peninsula of Roseneath, which she could see any day from her own home. And she began to wonder whether the steamer was going up the stream, winding through the park.

And, as they went farther on, why should she trouble herself to wonder at the hundreds of vessels crowding the docks of Greenock at the mouth of the river? What mattered it to her that the immortal Watt was born in this town? Why, three miles beyond this, need she look at the villages of Gourock on the left, and Dunoon on the right; at the indenting and winding fiords which encroach upon the shore of Argyle, and make it like a Norwegian coast?

No, Miss Campbell was watching impatiently for the ruined tower of Leven. Did she expect to see some hob-goblin there? Not in the least, she simply wished to

be the first to signal Cloch light-house at the entrance of the Frith of Clyde.

At last, round a bend of the shore, the light-house appeared like a gigantic lamp.

"Cloch, Uncle Sam," said she. "There is Cloch!"

"Yes, there is Cloch," said he, re-echoing her words.

"There is the sea, Uncle Sib!"

"The sea, it is indeed," replied Sib.

"How beautiful it is!" repeated the two uncles, as though they beheld it now for the first time!

There was no mistake about it. At the entrance to the Frith could be seen a distinct sea-horizon.

However, it was but midday, and it would be some hours before the sun sank beneath the waves—some hours yet of impatient waiting for Miss Campbell! Besides, this was a south-western horizon, over which the sun only set in winter, so it was of no use to look for the phenomenon in that direction; it must be more towards the north-west, since it wanted now but six weeks to the autumnal equinox.

But no matter, it was the sea which now lay before Helena's eyes. Through the straits of the isles of Cumbrae, beyond the island of Bute, softly outlined against the sky, beyond the crests of Ailsa Craig and the hills of Arran, a clear line between sea and sky was distinctly visible.

Miss Campbell was watching it intently, absorbed in thought. As she stood motionless on the foot-bridge, she seemed to be measuring the length of the arc, to the point where the radiant orb must dip beneath the waters of the Archipelago of the Hebrides.

A voice roused the young dreamer from her reverie.

"It is quite time," Sib was saying.

"Time for what, uncle?"

"Time for luncheon," said Sam.

"Let us go, then," replied Helena.

CHAPTER V.

CHANGE OF STEAMERS.

AFTER partaking of an excellent luncheon, served in the saloon of the *Columbia*, Miss Campbell and her uncles again went on deck.

Helena could not repress an exclamation of disappointment when she once more resumed her post of observation.

"My horizon has gone!" said she.

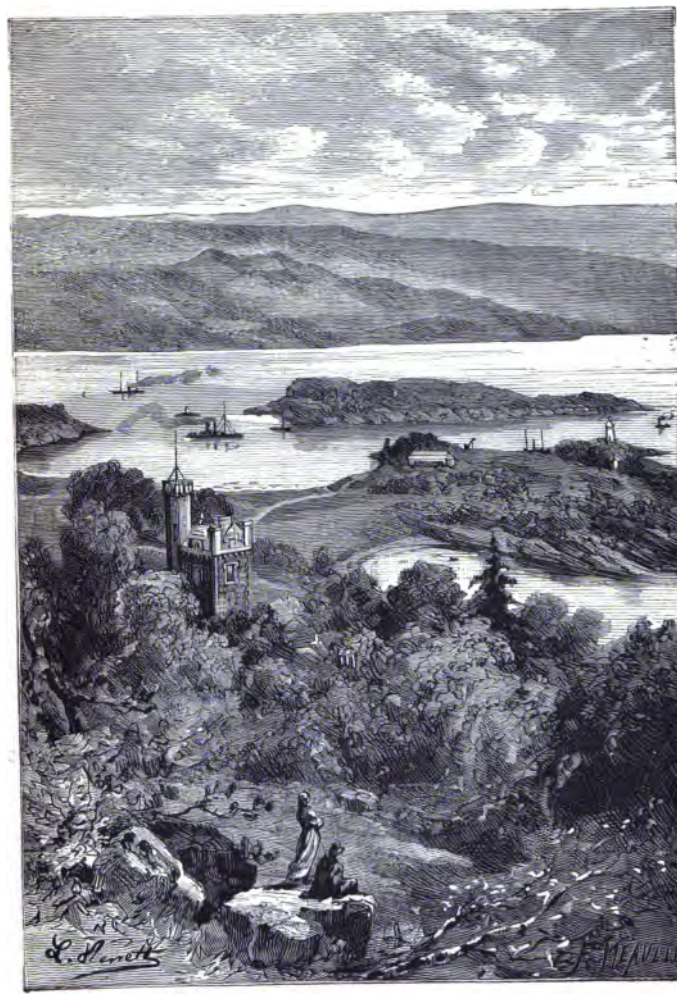
It must be confessed her horizon was no longer visible; it had disappeared for some minutes, and the steamer, heading northwards, was at this moment entering the long straits of the Kyles of Bute.

"This is too bad, Uncle Sam," said Miss Campbell, a little reproachful grimace.

But, my dear child—"

I shall not forget it, Uncle Sib!"

The brothers knew not what to say; however, it was



The Kyles of Bute.

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certainly not their fault if the *Columbia*, after changing her course, was then making towards the north-west.

In fact, there are two different ways of going by sea from Glasgow to Oban.

The one—that which the *Columbia* had not taken—is the longest. After calling at Rothsay, the chief town of the island of Bute, overlooked by its ancient castle and sheltered on its western side from gales by a high ridge of hills, the steamer can continue to descend the Frith of Clyde, then coast along the eastern shore of the island, pass in sight of the greater and lesser Cumbrae, and make for the southern point of Arran, which belongs almost entirely to the Duke of Hamilton, from the base of its rocks to the summit of the Goatfell, 2866 feet above the level of the sea.

The man at the helm turns the wheel, the compass is set due west, the island of Arran is doubled, the steamer turns the peninsula of Kintyre, and, ascending the western coast, enters the Gigha Pass, then through the Sound, between the islands of Islay and Jura, she arrives at the wide entrance of the Frith of Lorn, which narrows, until it is quite closed, a little above Oban.

Her uncles, as well as Miss Campbell, had cause to regret this change of route, for in coasting along the shores of Islay, they would have seen the ancient home

of the MacDonalds, who, at the beginning of the seventeenth century, were conquered and driven out by the Campbells; the scene of this historical fact, which touched them so closely, would have set their hearts beating in unison.

This route would just have suited Miss Campbell, for from Arran to the Mull of Kintyre the sea has a southern aspect; then from the Mull of Kintyre to the farther point of Islay it is a western sea, that is to say, that immense plain of water bounded only by the coast of America.

But this route is long, sometimes troublesome, if not dangerous, and among the passengers might be some who would be alarmed at the thought of venturing on a passage often rendered dangerous by gales off the shores of the Hebrides.

Thus engineers—among others Lesseps—thought of converting the peninsula of Kintyre into an island, and, thanks to their endeavours, the Crinan Canal has been cut through its northern end; the journey is thus shortened by a considerable distance, and the passage takes but three or four hours.

This was the route which the *Columbia* was taking in her passage from Glasgow to Oban, between lochs and straits with no other view than that of sea-shore, mountains, and forests. Of all the passengers, Miss

Campbell, undoubtedly, was the only one who really regretted the other route; but she was obliged to resign herself; besides, would not the sea-horizon be visible again when they were out of the Crinan Canal a few hours later, and even before sunset?

Just as the tourists, who had lingered in the saloon, again came on deck, the *Columbia* was at the entrance of Loch Riddan, off the little island of Elbangrieg, the last fortress where the heroic Duke of Argyll took refuge before he was crushed in his struggle for the political and religious freedom of Scotland. Then the steamer veered south, descended the straits of Bute, through a lovely panorama of wooded or barren isles, outlined against a background of light mist. At last, after having doubled Cape Ardlamont, she resumed her northerly course, across Loch Fyne, leaving to the left the village of East Tarbert, on the coast of Kintyre, rounded the Cape of Ardrishaig, and reached the village of Lochgilphead at the entrance of the Crinan Canal.

At this place the *Columbia* was obliged to be left, as she was too large for the navigation of the canal, through which only boats of light draught can pass.

A small steamer, called the *Linnet*, was waiting for the passengers of the *Columbia*, and the transhipment was effected in a few minutes. All took their places comfortably on the upper-deck of the steamer;

then the *Linnet* sped rapidly between the banks of the canal, whilst a bagpiper in national costume gave the company the benefit of his monotonous and melancholy music.

It is a charming passage through this canal, sometimes running between high banks, sometimes skirting heather-clad hills; here passing through the open country, there hemmed in between the straight walls of the reaches. There is some little delay in the locks. Whilst the canal men are opening the gates for the boats to pass through, young girls come and politely offer the passengers new milk, speaking with that Gaelic idiom very often incomprehensible to Englishmen.

Six hours later—there had been a delay of two hours at a lock which was in bad working order—the hamlets and farms of this somewhat dreary district, and the extensive marshes of the Add, which stretch along the right side of the canal, had been passed. The *Linnet* stopped a few minutes later at Ballenach, and a second change of steamers took place.

The passengers of the *Columbia* now become passengers of the *Glengary*, leaving the Bay of Crinan, doubled the point on which rose the ancient feudal castle of Duntroon.

Since they had rounded the Isle of Bute, the sea-horizon had not been again visible.

Miss Campbell's impatience can be easily imagined. Upon these waters, bounded in every direction by land, she might as well have been in the middle of Scotland, in the lake district, and in the country of Rob Roy, for on all sides were picturesque isles, with their verdant banks, and plantations of firs and larches.

At last the *Glengary* passed the northern point of Jura, and the sea-line was visible between this point and the Isle of Scarba.

"There it is, my dear Helena," said her Uncle Sam, pointing towards the west.

"It was not our fault," added Sib, "if these tiresome islands, confound them! hid it from you for a time."

"You are quite forgiven, uncles," replied Miss Campbell; "but don't let it happen again."

CHAPTER VI.

THE GULF OF CORYVRECHAN.

IT was then six o'clock in the evening, and it wanted two or three hours till sunset. Most certainly the *Glengary* would reach Oban before the sun sank beneath the waters of the Atlantic, and Miss Campbell had some grounds for thinking that her wishes would be fulfilled that same evening. In fact, the cloudless sky seemed made expressly for the observation of the phenomenon, and the sea-horizon must be visible between the isles of Oronsay, Colonsay, and Mull, during the latter part of the passage.

But a very unexpected accident was about to delay the steamer's progress.

Miss Campbell, buried in her one absorbing thought, stood motionless at her post, never for a moment losing sight of the line between the two islands, and as she was undoubtedly the only person on board so

intently watching that part of the horizon, she was the first to notice how rough the sea appeared to be between Jura and Scarba. At the same time she could faintly hear the far-off roar of billows, and yet there was scarcely a ripple on the placid surface of the sea through which the steamer was cutting her way.

"What is the cause of the sea being so rough out there?" asked Miss Campbell of her uncles.

They could not tell her, knowing no more than she did what was happening three miles off in the narrow pass.

Then addressing the captain, who was standing on the foot-bridge, she asked him the same question.

"It is a simple phenomenon caused by the tide," replied he; "and the noise you hear comes from the Gulf of Coryvrechan."

"But the weather is splendid," observed Miss Campbell; "and there is hardly a breath of wind to be felt."

"It does not depend in the least upon the weather," replied the captain. "It is the result of the high tide, which, coming out of the Sound of Jura, finds no outlet except between the islands of Jura and Scarba. Hence it happens that the water rushes through with terrific force, and it would be dangerous for any small craft to venture there."

The Gulf of Coryvrechan, justly dreaded in these parts, is regarded as one of the most curious places in the western archipelago. A legend affirms that it owes its name to a Scandinavian prince who perished there in Celtic times. It is indeed a very dangerous pass, and many are the boats which have been drawn into the eddy and lost: for its bad reputation it may be compared with the treacherous whirlpool of Maelström on the coast of Norway.

Meanwhile, as Miss Campbell kept her eyes fixed on the seething mass of waters, her attention was particularly attracted to a point of the strait, where could be seen what might have been a rock, had it not moved up and down with the heaving billows.

"Look there! look there! captain," exclaimed Helena. "If it is not a rock, what can it be?"

"It is most likely," replied he, "a waif drawn into the currents, or rather—"

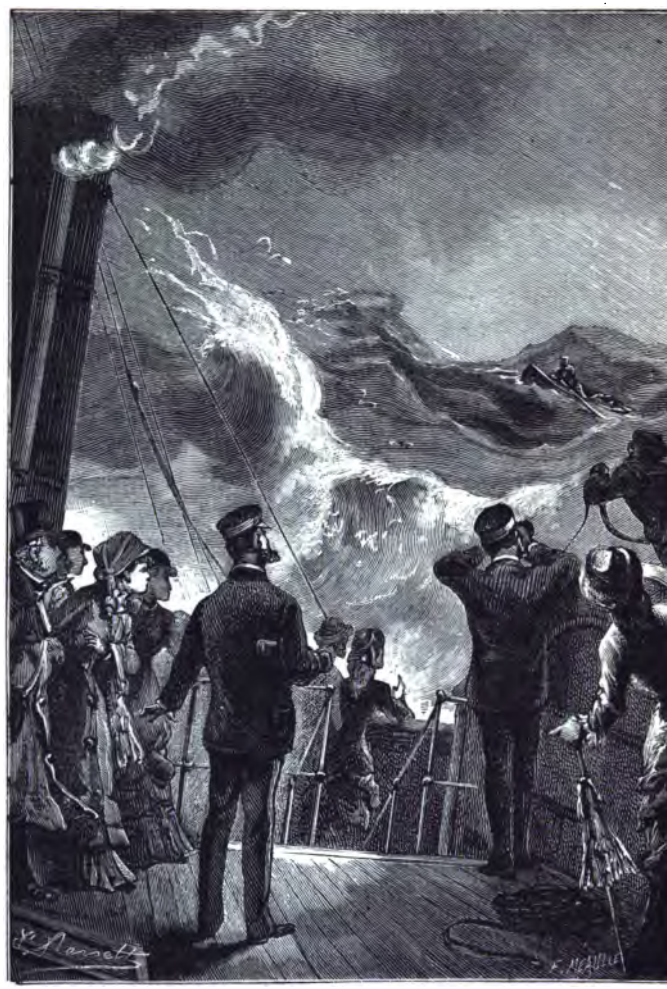
And looking through his glass,—

"A boat!" he exclaimed.

"A boat!" repeated Miss Campbell.

"Yes!—if I am not very much mistaken—a boat in peril on the Coryvrechan!"

At these words the passengers crowded on to the bridge, and looked in the direction of the gulf. There could no longer be any doubt that a boat had been



All eyes were fixed on this point.

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drawn into the pass, and, carried along by the high tide on the whirling eddies, was now rushing on to certain destruction.

All eyes were fixed on the point of the gulf, about four or five miles distant from the *Glengary*.

"Most likely it is only a boat adrift," observed one of the passengers.

"Not so, for I can see a man in it," replied another.

"A man—two men!" cried Partridge, who was standing beside Miss Campbell.

There were certainly two men there, who had evidently lost all control over their craft. The slight breeze off the land was not enough to fill their sail, and draw them out of the eddies, and oars were powerless in such a sea, to prevent their being carried into the Coryvrechan.

"Captain!" cried Miss Campbell, "we cannot leave those poor creatures to perish. They will be lost if they are left to themselves. We must go to their help. We must."

All on board thought the same, and eagerly awaited the captain's answer.

"The *Glengary* could not venture into the Coryvrechan; but perhaps we may be able to get within reach of the boat," he replied.

And turning towards the passengers, he seemed to wait for their approbation.

Miss Campbell went up to him.

"We must, captain, we must," she exclaimed in a tone of entreaty. "My fellow-passengers, I am sure, wish it as much as I do! It is a matter of life or death for two of our fellow-creatures, whom you may perhaps be able to save. Oh, captain, I beseech you!"

"Yes—yes," cried several of the passengers, moved by this young girl's generous intervention.

The captain again looked through his glass, carefully observed the direction of the currents, then calling to the man at the wheel,—

"Hard a starboard!" said he.

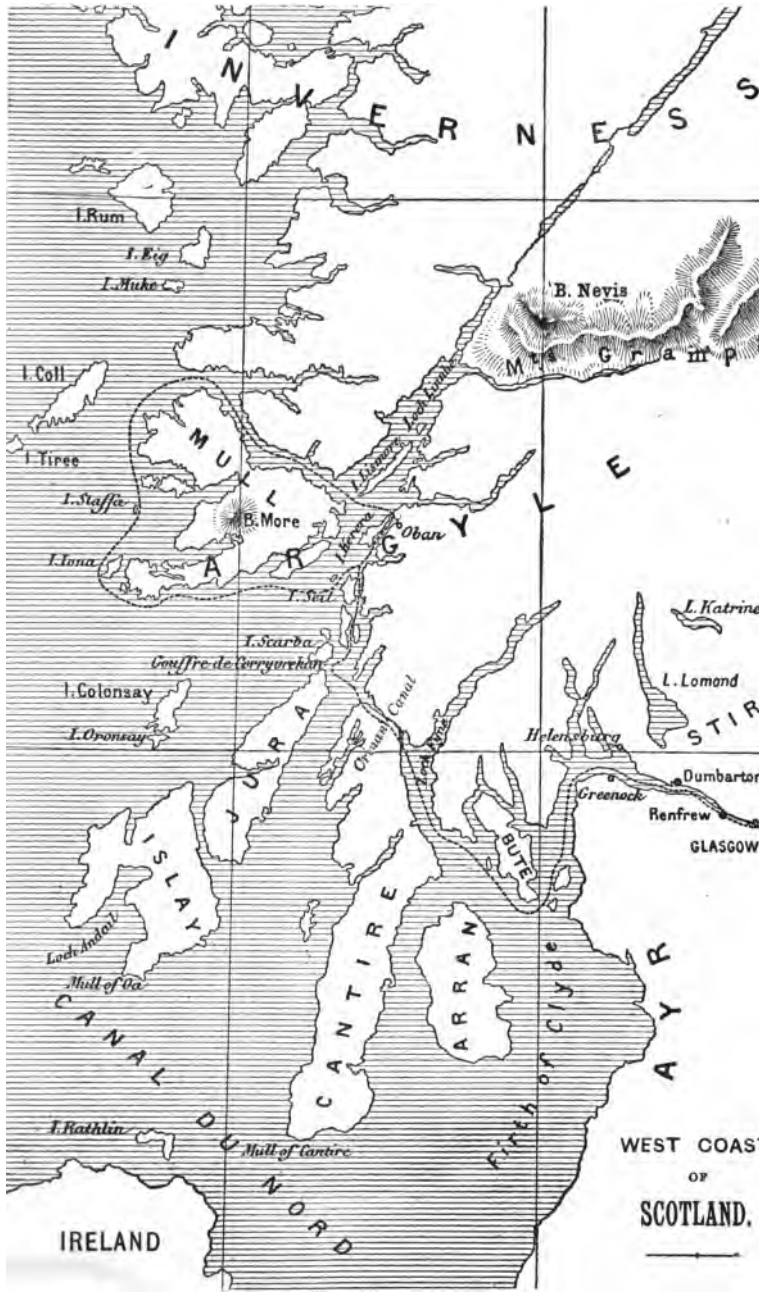
The *Glengary* gradually veered round to the west. The engineer received the order to put on steam, and the isle of Jura was soon left some distance behind.

Nobody spoke on board, and all eyes were anxiously fixed upon the boat, which gradually became more visible.

It was only a small fishing-smack, the mast of which had been lowered, in order to give her more chance of resisting the violence of the waves.

One of the two men in the boat was lying full length in the stern, the other, rowing with all his might, made strenuous efforts to extricate her from the whirling tide. If he should not succeed, they were lost.

In half an hour's time the *Glengary* had reached the


INVERNESS
I. Rum
I. Eig
I. Muke
B. Nevis
Mts Grampi
I. Coll
I. Tiree
I. Staffa
B. More
Oban
I. Iona
I. Scarba
Gouffre de Corryvrekan
I. Colonsay
I. Oronsay
L. Katrine
L. Lomond
Helensburg
Dumbarton
Greenock
Renfrew
GLASGOW
BUTE
ISLAY
JURA
ARRAN
CANTIRE
Loch Indaal
Mull of Oa
Mull of Cantire
I. Rathlin
Firth of Clyde
CANAL D'UNORD
IRELAND
WEST COAST
OF
SCOTLAND.

verge of the Coryvrechan, and began to pitch violently; but not one on board uttered a protest, although the rolling of the vessel might well have alarmed simple tourists.

At this part of the strait the sea was perfectly white, and nothing could be seen but a vast sheet of foam, upheaved in great masses by the fury of the waters.

The boat was but half a mile off, the man at the oars was making a last effort to extricate her from the eddies. He well understood that the *Glengary* was coming to his assistance, but he also saw that she could not venture much nearer, and that he must do his utmost to reach her. His companion, lying motionless in the stern, seemed to be deprived of all power of giving assistance.

Miss Campbell, filled with the keenest emotion, never took her eyes off this boat, which she had been the first to observe, and towards which, thanks to her earnest entreaties, the *Glengary* was now making her way.

Meanwhile, the situation grew more critical, and it was to be feared the steamer would not arrive in time. In order to avoid serious danger she was obliged to reduce her speed considerably, and, as it was, the water shipped over the bows, threatened to inundate the engine-room, and put out the fires—a contingency to be dreaded in this turbulent sea.

The captain, leaning upon the hand-rail of the bridge, was carefully watching that they were not driven out of their course, and skilfully manœuvred so that they should not be caught amidships by the heavy seas.

The boat, however, could not free herself from the eddies. At times she was completely hidden behind some gigantic breaker, and then caught in the swirl of the gulf, was spun round and round like an arrow, or rather like a stone flung from a sling.

"Faster! Faster!" cried Miss Campbell, unable to repress her feelings.

But at the sight of the great foam-crested billows some of the passengers already uttered cries of alarm; and the captain, aware of the risk he was incurring, hesitated about going any nearer the Coryvrechan.

The distance between the boat and the *Glengary* was scarcely half a cable's length, and the unhappy men, on the verge of destruction, could be distinctly recognized.

They were an old sailor and a young man, the former lying helpless at the stern, and the latter rowing with all his might.

At this moment a heavy sea struck the steamer, and rendered her situation critical.

The captain dare not venture any farther in the pass, and it was as much as he could do to pre-



" My imprudence nearly cost us our lives ! "

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vent his ship from being drawn into the surging currents.

All at once the fishing-smack, after tossing for a moment on the crest of a great wave, disappeared.

There was a cry of horror on board!

Had the boat been swamped? No. Again she rose on the back of another wave, and one last desperate effort with the oars brought her alongside the steamer.

"Bravo! bravo!" cried the sailors at the bows, and they held in readiness a coil of ropes, watching for the moment to throw them.

Suddenly the captain gave the order to put on steam, the *Glengary*'s speed increased, and she ventured boldly between the two islands, whilst the boat again drew some fathoms nearer.

At this moment the ropes were thrown out, and seized by the man in the boat. The engines of the *Glengary* were reversed, in order to extricate her from this dangerous position, and she steamed back with the boat in tow.

Leaving his oars, the young man raised his companion in his arms, and, with the help of the sailors, hoisted him on board. The aged seaman had been disabled by a heavy sea whilst the boat was being drawn into the pass, and thus was totally incapable of helping his

companion, who was left to depend entirely on his own efforts.

When at last the young man sprang on to the deck of the *Glengary*, he appeared to have lost none of his cool self-possession, his face was calm, and his whole bearing showed him capable of moral as well as physical courage.

His first care was to look after his companion, the owner of the smack, who was soon brought round by a stiff glass of grog.

"Mr. Oliver!" said he.

"Ah! my old friend," replied the young man, "and what think you of this sea?"

"It is nothing! I have seen many the like of this, and it is going down already!"

"Yes, thank Heaven; but my imprudence nearly cost us our lives! But here we are safe and sound."

"And by your efforts, Mr. Oliver."

"No, by the help of God!"

And the young man, warmly grasping the seaman's hands, made no attempt to conceal his emotion, which visibly affected all the passengers.

Then turning to the skipper, just as he was coming off the bridge—

"Captain," said he, "I don't know how to thank you enough for the service you have rendered us."



Then turning to the skipper.

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"I only did my duty, sir," replied the captain, "and, to tell the truth, you owe more thanks to my passengers than to me."

The young man warmly shook the captain's hand, and then turning to the passengers, he lifted his hat, and bowed gracefully to them.

Had not the *Glengary* arrived so opportunely, he and his companion would certainly have been lost.

During this exchange of civilities Miss Campbell had thought fit to retire. She did not wish attention to be drawn to the part she had played in this dramatic rescue. All of a sudden, as she stood on the bridge, her thoughts reverted to the object of her journey, and looking towards the western horizon, she exclaimed,—

"And what of the sunset, and the Green Ray?"

"No more sun for to-day!" said her Uncle Sam.

"No more chance of seeing the Green Ray!" added Sib.

It was too late, the sun had already disappeared below the wonderfully clear horizon, and had shot forth its Green Ray into space, whilst Miss Campbell's thoughts were occupied with other matters. Thus an opportunity, which might perhaps be long in recurring, was lost!

"It is a pity," she murmured; however, with little regret in her tone, as she considered all that had just happened.

Meanwhile the *Glengary* made her way out of the Coryvrechan Pass, and again resumed her northerly course. Giving his companion a last hearty grasp of the hand, the old seaman, now quite recovered, got back into his boat, and sailed for Jura.

As to the young man, whose leathern portmanteau had been put on board, he made one more tourist *en route* for Oban.

Leaving the islands of Shuna and Luing, where are the rich slate quarries belonging to the Marquis of Breadalbane, the steamer coasted along the isle of Seil, and a little later entering the Frith of Lorn, she steamed between the volcanic island of Kerera and the mainland. Then, as the shades of twilight deepened into night, she came to her moorings in the harbour of Oban.



Oban.

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CHAPTER VII.

ARISTOBULUS URSICLOS.

EVEN had there been as great a number of visitors on the beach of Oban as are to be found at Brighton, Ramsgate, or Margate, Aristobulus Ursiclos could not have failed to attract attention.

Without any pretence to be placed at the head of her rivals, Oban is a bathing-place much frequented by visitors from all parts of the United Kingdom. Its situation on the straits of Mull, sheltered from the western winds by the island of Kerera, attracts a great many people. Some come for the bathing, others make it a central point for excursions to Glasgow, Inverness, and the Hebrides. Here it must be added that Oban is not in the least, as many watering-places are, a kind of convalescent home. Most of the people who come to pass the hot summer months here are in good health, and one does not run the risk of playing whist with one dying, and two sick people.

Oban has only been built about fifty years, and has quite a modern air in the arrangement of its houses and streets; nevertheless, the church, a kind of Norman edifice with an elegant steeple, the old ivy-clad castle of Dunolly, standing on a rock at the north end, the panorama of white houses and pretty villas which rise on the background of hills, lastly, the peaceful waters of the bay, where graceful pleasure-boats lie at anchor, make a charming picture.

This year, and during this month of August, there was no lack of visitors at Oban. In the visitor's book of one of the best hotels, among others more or less illustrious, the name of Aristobulus Ursiclos, of Dumfries, had figured for two or three weeks past.

He was a "person" of the age of twenty-eight, who had never been young, and probably would never be old; he gave one the impression of having been born at the age which he now appeared to be. His figure was neither good nor bad, his face very insignificant, with hair too fair for a man; he was short-sighted, and wore spectacles, and his small nose did not seem to belong to his face; of the 130,000 hairs which every human head ought to have, according to the latest statistics, he possessed about 60,000. He wore a beard round his cheeks and chin, which gave him rather the appearance of a

monkey; had he been a monkey, he would have been a fine specimen, perhaps the missing link in the Darwinian theory.

Aristobulus was wealthy, but wealthier still in ideas, and yet the young *savant*, a graduate of the universities of Oxford and Edinburgh, was only clever enough to weary others with his universal knowledge; he knew more of the sciences of physic, chemistry, astronomy, and mathematics than of literature. He was very pretentious, but in reality it wanted but little to make him a perfect idiot. His chief mania, or his monomania if you like it better, was to give at random an explanation of the most natural things; in short, he was a pedant of a very disagreeable kind. One did not laugh at him because his remarks were laughable, but because he made himself so ridiculous. No one could have less claim to the motto of English Freemasons: *Audi, vide, tace;* he never listened, never saw anything, and was never silent. In a word, to borrow a comparison not inappropriate in this country of Walter Scott, Aristobulus Ursiclos, with his positive opinions, reminded one infinitely more of the Baillie Nicol Jarvie than his poetical cousin Rob Roy MacGregor.

And what daughter of the Highlands, without excepting Miss Campbell, would not have preferred Rob Roy to Nicol Jarvie?

Such was Aristobulus Ursiclos. How could the brothers have taken such a fancy to this pedant, and even have gone so far as to wish to be connected with him by marriage? How had he been able to make himself so agreeable to these worthy old gentlemen? Perhaps because he was the first who had made any overtures for the hand of their niece. With a kind of ingenuous delight the brothers had undoubtedly said to each other,—

"Here is a young man of good family, with a large fortune, which he has inherited from his parents and relatives, and, moreover, extraordinarily learned! He will be an excellent match for our dear Helena! This marriage can be easily brought about, and everything is most desirable."

Thereupon they had offered each other snuff, and then had shut the box with a little click, which seemed to say,—

"That matter is settled."

The brothers thought they had been very clever, thanks to this whim of the Green Ray, in bringing Miss Campbell to Oban. There, without any suspicion of an arranged plan, she would be able to resume her acquaintance with Aristobulus, which his absence had temporarily interrupted.

The hall of Helensburgh had been exchanged for the

finest apartments in the Caledonian Hotel. If their stay at Oban should be prolonged it might be pleasanter to take some villa on the heights overlooking the town; but, meanwhile, with the assistance of Dame Bess and Partridge, all were comfortably settled in Master MacFyne's establishment.

At nine o'clock next morning the brothers Melville left the hotel, and went in search of Aristobulus, while Miss Campbell, still asleep in her room on the first floor, was little dreaming of their errand.

Our two friends went down to the beach, and knowing that their niece's *soupirant* was staying in one of the hotels on the north side of the bay, they walked in that direction.

It must be admitted that they were guided by a presentiment, for, ten minutes after they had started, Aristobulus, who was taking his usual morning walk in pursuit of science, on the beach, met them, and exchanged a formal greeting.

"Mr. Ursiclos!" exclaimed the brothers.

"You here, gentlemen?" replied Aristobulus, in a supercilious tone that betrayed no surprise. "You here, gentlemen, at Oban?"

"Since last night," said Sam.

"And we are happy to see you, Mr. Ursiclos, looking so well," added Sib.

"Oh, very well indeed, gentlemen. Of course you have heard of the despatch which has just arrived?"

"The despatch?" said Sam. "Has Gladstone already—"

"It has nothing to do with Gladstone," replied Mr. Ursiclos, somewhat disdainfully; "it is a meteorological report."

"Ah, indeed!" replied the two brothers.

"Yes; it is announced that the depression at Swinemunde has moved towards the north, and has sensibly fallen. Its centre is at present near Stockholm, where the barometer, declining an inch, that is twenty-five millimétres,"—to make use of the decimal system in vogue with *savants*—"stands at twenty-eight inches and six-tenths, or 726 millimétres. Though the pressure varies little in England and Scotland, it fell a tenth yesterday at Valentia, and two-tenths at Stornoway."

"And from this depression—?" asked Sam.

"We must conclude—?" added Sib.

"That this fine weather will not last," replied Aristobulus Ursiclos; "and that the sky will soon be charged with rain-clouds, brought up by the south-westerly winds from the Atlantic."

The brothers thanked the young *savant* for having acquainted them with this interesting prognostic, and concluded from it that they would have to wait some



"And you have come—?"

Page 97.

time for the Green Ray, for which they were not in the least sorry, as it would serve to prolong their stay at Oban.

"And you have come—?" asked Aristobulus, after having picked up a flint, which he examined with the greatest attention.

The two brothers took care not to interrupt him in this study, but when the flint had been added to the collection already in the young *savant's* pocket,—

"We have come with the very natural intention of spending a short time here," began Sib.

"And we must add," said Sam, "that Miss Campbell, who accompanies us, has—"

"Ah! Miss Campbell," interrupted Aristobulus.—"I believe that flint belongs to the Gaelic epoch, there are marks on it—really I shall be charmed to see Miss Campbell again!—marks of meteoric origin. This remarkably mild climate will do her a great deal of good."

"At present she is wonderfully well," observed Sam; "and has no need of the trip for her health."

"No matter," continued Aristobulus, "the air is excellent here; zero twenty-one of oxygen, and zero seventy-nine of azote, with a little moisture in hygienic quantity; as for carbonic acid, there is scarcely a vestige. I analyze it every morning."

The brothers flattered themselves that it was a polite attention intended for their niece.

"But," asked Aristobulus, "if you did not come to Oban on account of your health, may I ask why you left Helensburgh?"

"We have no need to conceal the reason from you, considering the position in which we stand," replied Sib.

"Am I to believe that this change," interrupted the young *savant*, "is owing to a very natural desire to give me an opportunity of seeing Miss Campbell under circumstances where we shall have better opportunity of knowing and esteeming each other?"

"Assuredly," replied Sam; "we thought that in this way the end might be attained more easily."

"I approve of your plan, gentlemen," said Aristobulus. "Here, Miss Campbell and I are on neutral ground; we shall be able, occasionally, to talk of the fluctuations of the sea, the direction of the winds, the height of the waves, the variation of the tides, and other physical phenomena, which must be of the highest interest to her!"

After exchanging a smile of satisfaction, the brothers bowed their approbation, and added that, on their return to Helensburgh, they hoped to receive their amiable guest under a more definite title.

Aristobulus replied that he had great pleasure in accepting their invitation, and still more so as the

Government were just now about to make some important drainage works on the Clyde, between Helensburgh and Greenock—works to be carried on under novel conditions, by means of electric engines; thus, while he was staying at the hall, he would be able to make observations of the work, and calculate its probable utility.

The brothers could not but acknowledge how favourable this coincidence was to their plans; when the young *savant* was not otherwise engaged, he would be able to amuse himself, following the different phases of this interesting work.

"But," asked Aristobulus, "of course you doubtless thought of some pretext for coming here, for Miss Campbell will hardly expect to see me at Oban?"

"Yes, indeed," replied Sib, "and our niece herself furnished this pretext."

"Ah!" exclaimed the young *savant;* "and what is it?"

"It is a question of seeing some physical phenomenon, under conditions which cannot be obtained at Helensburgh."

"Indeed, gentlemen," said Aristobulus, adjusting his spectacles; "this, already, proves that there is a sympathetic affinity between Miss Campbell and myself! May I know what the phenomenon is which cannot be observed at Helensburgh?"

"Nothing more or less than the Green Ray," replied Sam.

"The Green Ray?" exclaimed Aristobulus, with some surprise. "I have never heard of it! Dare I ask what this Green Ray may be?"

The brothers explained as well as they could the nature of the phenomenon which had lately been drawn to the attention of the readers of the *Morning Post*.

"Pooh!" said Aristobulus, "it is a mere curiosity, of very little interest, which may be included in the somewhat childish domain of amusing physics."

"Miss Campbell is but a young girl," replied Sib, "and she seems to attach an exaggerated importance to this phenomenon—"

"For she declares she will never marry until she has seen it," added Sam.

"Ah! well, gentlemen," replied Aristobulus, "we will show her the Green Ray!"

Then all three, taking the lane through the fields alongside the shore, returned to the hotel.

Aristobulus did not lose this opportunity of observing to the brothers how women's minds were easily pleased with trifles, and he enlarged upon this subject, by dwelling at length upon all that must be done to raise the level of their neglected education, not that he thought

their brain, which is less provided with cerebral matter than a man's, and very different in the arrangement of its cells, could ever attain to the intelligence of lofty speculations! But without going as far as that, perhaps it might be elevated by a special course of training; although ever since there had been women in the world, never had one of them distinguished herself by any of those discoveries which rendered illustrious Aristotle, Euclid, Harvey, Hahnemann, Pascal, Newton, Laplace, Arago, Humphrey Davy, Edison, and others.

Then he launched into an explanation of different physical phenomena, and discoursed of *omni re scibili* without any further mention of Miss Campbell.

The brothers listened to him attentively—all the more so perhaps as they were unable to get in a word during this monologue, which Aristobulus emphasized with imperious and pedantic hums and has!

When they were within a few paces of the hotel they stopped for a minute, to take leave of each other.

A young lady was standing at one of the hotel windows, and, with a disconcerted air, seemed to be looking in every direction for something.

All at once Miss Campbell—for she it was—caught sight of her uncles; the window was immediately closed and a few minutes later the young girl came to them on the beach, looking very grave and reproachful.

The brothers exchanged a glance. What was the matter with Helena? Was it the presence of Aristobulus which seemed to annoy her?

Meanwhile, the young *savant* had advanced, and was bowing stiffly to Miss Campbell.

"Mr. Ursiclos—" said the one brother, ceremoniously introducing him.

"Who, by the greatest chance, happens to be at Oban—" added Sib.

"Ah! Mr. Ursiclos?"

And Miss Campbell scarcely took the trouble to bow.

Then turning to her uncles, who felt very much embarrassed, and hardly knew which way to look,—

"Uncles?" she said sternly.

"Yes, dear Helena," replied they both, somewhat uneasily.

"Are we really at Oban?"

"At Oban? certainly."

"On the western coast?"

"Exactly."

"Very well, then we shall not be here in an hour's time!"

"In an hour?"

"Did I not ask you to bring me where I could get a sea-horizon?"

"Of course you did, dear child."

"Will you have the kindness to show me where it is?"

The brothers looked round and round in dismay.

Before them, neither to the south-west nor the north-east was there a single interval between the islands, where a line between the sea and sky was at all visible; Seil, Kerera, and Kismore formed a continuous barrier the whole distance, and they were obliged to confess that the horizon desired and promised was not to be found at Oban.

The brothers had not given it a thought, and as they walked along the beach, they made use of characteristic expressions inferring disappointment and ill-humour.

"Pooh!" said the one.

"Pshaw!" muttered the other.

CHAPTER VIII.

A CLOUD ON THE HORIZON.

AN explanation had become necessary; but as Aristobulus would have been none the wiser for it, Miss Campbell bowed stiffly to him, and went back to the hotel.

Aristobulus returned the young lady's bow just as frigidly; he was evidently annoyed at being made subservient to a ray, of whatever colour it might be, and he took his way home along the shore muttering to himself.

The brothers felt very ill-at-ease, and when they were back in their private sitting-room, they waited for Miss Campbell's explanation.

This was simple enough; they had come to Oban on purpose to get a sea-horizon, and there was not one to be seen, or so little that it was not worth mention.

The two uncles could but honestly argue that they did

not know Oban! Who would ever have thought that they would not have the open sea here, since it was such a frequented bathing-place. It was perhaps the only point on the coast where, thanks to these tiresome islands, the sea-line was not visible!

"Ah! well," said Miss Campbell, in a tone which she tried to make as stern as possible, "we must find out some other place than Oban, even if we have to sacrifice the advantage of Mr. Ursiclos's company."

The brothers looked down, and made no reply to this direct hint.

"We are going to pack up and leave here this very day," said Helena.

"So be it!" replied both uncles, who now could only make amends for their folly by passive submission to her wishes.

And immediately Dame Bess was summoned.

The housekeeper came up, followed by Partridge; both were at once informed of the change, and knowing that their young mistress's word was law, they did not dream of asking the reason of this hurried departure.

But they had reckoned without their host, Mr. MacFyne, the proprietor of the hotel.

They little knew the customs of these excellent institutions, even in hospitable Scotland, if they thought that they, a party of three gentry and two servants,

would be allowed to depart without some effort being made to detain them, and this was what now happened.

When he had been informed of the reason of their departure, Mr. MacFyne declared that everything might be arranged to the general satisfaction, without saying anything of his own particular pleasure in being able to keep his distinguished guests.

What would please Miss Campbell, and consequently what did the gentlemen desire? A sea-view with a clear horizon? Nothing could be easier, since they only wanted to see this horizon at sunset. They could not see it from the shore of Oban? Very well! From Mull only a small part of the Atlantic towards the south-west could be seen. But a little way down the coast was the island of Seil, connected with the mainland by a bridge; there there was nothing to interrupt their view of the western sea.

Now it was only a four or five miles' drive to the island, and when the weather was favourable, a carriage and pair of good horses would easily take Miss Campbell and her friends there in an hour or so.

In confirmation of this statement the glib hotel-keeper pointed out to them a large map hanging in the hall, so that Miss Campbell might not think he was trying to impose on her; and, indeed, facing the island of Seil was a large space comprising a third of that horizon over

which the sun sets during the weeks preceding and following the equinox.

The matter was thus arranged to the extreme satisfaction of Mr. MacFyne, and to the perfect accommodation of the brothers. Miss Campbell generously granted them her pardon, and made no more disagreeable allusions to the presence of Aristobulus Ursiclos.

"But," said Sam, "it really is strange that it should be precisely at Oban that one cannot get a sea-horizon."

"Nature is so whimsical!" replied his brother.

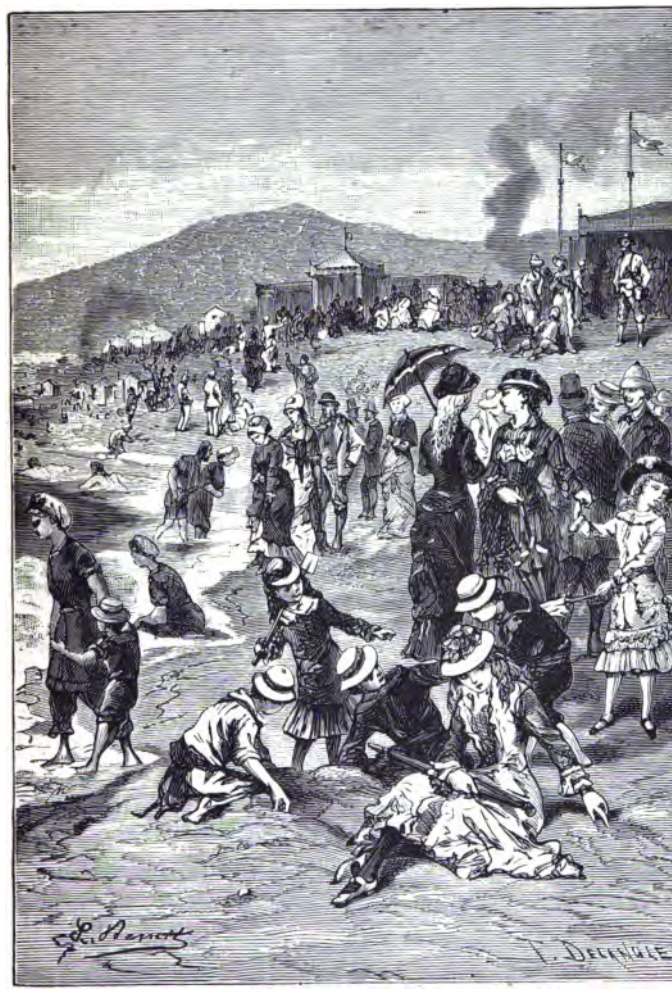
Aristobulus was doubtless very glad to hear that Miss Campbell was not going elsewhere to make her meteorological observations; but he was so much absorbed in one of his abstruse problems, that he quite forgot to express his satisfaction.

The whimsical young lady did not seem to notice this delinquency, for whilst she was still utterly indifferent to him, her greeting was not quite so frigid when next they met.

Meanwhile, the state of the atmosphere had slightly improved; but though the weather remained fine, at sunrise and sunset the sky was generally flecked with clouds, so that it would only have been waste of time to go to Seil; they must exercise a little more patience.

During these long days Miss Campbell, leaving her uncles with the suitor of their choice, would wander along

the sea-shore, sometimes accompanied by Dame Bess, but more often alone. She was glad to get away from the crowd of idle people one generally meets at bathing-places, whole families whose only occupation seems to be to sit on the beach and watch the tide come in and go out, whilst small boys and girls dig and roll about on the sands with a truly British freedom of attitude; grave phlegmatic gentlemen in their somewhat rudimentary bathing costumes, whose principal object in life seems to be to plunge up and down for ten minutes or so in the salt water; men and women of the highest respectability sitting motionless and stiff on the green benches, listlessly turning over the leaves of a book; tourists with telescopes slung over their shoulders; others with broad-brimmed hats, high gaiters, and umbrellas under their arms, who had arrived yesterday, and would leave again to-morrow; then in the midst of this crowd, sellers of all descriptions hawking their goods, electricians who for a few pence sell the fluid to any one who likes to pay for the fancy; itinerant piano-organists; photographers, in any number, printing off impromptu groups by the dozen; merchants in black overcoats; costermongers in broad-brimmed hats, pushing before them their little trucks, on which are displayed for sale the finest fruits in the world; negro minstrels with blackened faces, in various disguises, acting popular plays and singing



On the sands.

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comic songs, surrounded with a circle of children who gravely join in the choruses.

This sort of life at the sea-side had no charm for Miss Campbell; she preferred to get away as far as possible from the crowd, who seem as much strangers to each other as though they had come from the four quarters of the globe.

So, when her uncles, uneasy at her absence, wanted to find her, they had to search at the farther end of the beach, among the rocks overlooking the bay.

There Miss Campbell might be found, like Minna of "The Pirate," leaning against a rock, her head resting on one hand, and with the other listlessly picking the seaweed growing here and there; her absent glance wandering from a "stack" whose rocky summit rose perpendicularly, to some obscure cavern, one of those "helyers," as they call them in Scotland, echoing with the roaring of the sea.

In the distance might be seen rows of cormorants, sitting motionless like sacred birds, which she liked to watch when disturbed from their tranquillity they flew off, skimming the crests of the waves with their wings.

Of whom was the young girl thinking? Aristobulus Ursiclos undoubtedly would have had the conceit, and her uncles the simplicity to imagine that she was thinking of him, wherein they would have been much mistaken.

In her musings Miss Campbell's thoughts would wander back to the scene in the Coryvrechan. Again she saw the boat in peril, and the *Glengary* venturing to its assistance through the straits; again she experienced that keen emotion which had thrilled her when the boat with its two occupants had disappeared behind the breakers! Then there came the rescue, the rope thrown at the opportune moment, the graceful young man appearing on deck, calm and smiling, less moved than herself, and bowing with a dignified air to the passengers.

To an imaginative young girl here was matter for romance, but it seemed that the romance would be concluded in this first chapter; the book had been abruptly closed in Miss Campbell's hands, and at what page might she ever open it again, since her "hero," like some Woden of the Gaelic epoch, had never reappeared.

But had she ever looked out for him among the heedless crowds on the sea-shore? Perhaps. Had she met him? No; he would never have recognized her. Why should he have noticed her on board the *Glengary?* Why should he have come to her? How could he have guessed that it was to her he owed his safety? And yet it was she before any one else who had noticed the boat in danger; she who had been the first to entreat the captain to go to his rescue! And, in fact, it was owing

to him that she had perhaps that evening lost the sight of the Green Ray; it was to be feared so at least.

During the three days following the arrival of the Melville family at Oban, the sky would have driven any astronomer to despair. It was covered with a kind of haze, more deceiving than clouds would have been; the most powerful glass or telescope, or even the reflector at Cambridge or Parsonstown, would have been incapable of piercing it. The sun alone was sufficiently powerful to penetrate it with its rays; but at sunset the sea-horizon was embanked with light mists, which were dyed with the most brilliant hues, so that it would have been impossible for the Green Ray to reach the eyes of an observer.

Carried away by a somewhat fanciful imagination, Miss Campbell, in her reverie, confused the hero of the Gulf of Coryvrechan and the Green Ray. Certain it was that neither one nor the other appeared, and if mists obscured one, incognito concealed the other.

The brothers Melville were ill-advised when they besought their niece to have patience. Miss Campbell did not trouble herself to make them responsible for these atmospheric disturbances. Thus they only had recourse to the excellent barometer which they had taken care to bring with them from Helensburgh, and which steadily refused to rise. In truth, they would have given their snuff-box to obtain a cloudless sunset!

As for the *savant* Ursiclos, one day, in speaking of these mists, he had the ill address to pronounce their formation quite natural, and this led to a short physical lecture, which he made in Miss Campbell's presence. He spoke of clouds in general, of their downward motion which brought them to the horizon with a falling temperature, of mists reduced to a vesiculous state, of their scientific classing into nimbus, stratus, cumulus, cirrus! Needless to say he was not thanked for his display of wisdom. And this was so marked that the brothers did not know what attitude to assume during the inopportune discourse.

Yes, Miss Campbell pointedly "cut" the young *savant;* first of all she pretended to look in quite an opposite direction, so as not to hear him; then she kept her eyes persistently on Dunolly Castle, and appeared quite oblivious of his presence. Finally, she studiously examined her dainty sand-shoes, the most marked form of undisguised indifference, and the greatest proof of contempt the young Scotchwoman could have shown, and which was intended as much for the speaker as for his lecture.

Aristobulus, who was so entirely absorbed in his own self-importance and never spoke but for his own gratification, either did not or did not appear to notice this treatment.

Thus passed the 3rd, 4th, 5th, and 6th of August;

but during that last day, to the brothers' great delight, the barometer rose some degrees above change.

The following day dawned fair and cloudless. At ten o'clock the sun was shining brilliantly, and the sky was of a pure, limpid azure.

Miss Campbell could not let this opportunity escape. A carriage belonging to the hôtel, always kept at her disposal, was ordered; now, if ever, was the time to make use of it; so at five o'clock in the afternoon, she and her uncles took their places in this carriage and four, driven by a skilful "whip," Partridge sitting in the rumble, and thus they started off on the road to Clachan.

Aristobulus Ursiclos, to his great regret—if not to Miss Campbell's—being deeply engaged in some important scientific pursuit, was unable to make one of the party.

The drive was charming from every point of view; the carriage took the road along the sea-shore, the whole length of the strait which separates the isle of Kerera from the mainland. This island, of volcanic origin, is most picturesque; but it had one drawback in Miss Campbell's eyes, namely, that it obstructed her view of the sea-horizon; however, as this would only last for about four miles and a half, she condescended to admire its harmonious outline, clearly defined against the sky, with the ruins of the Danish castle crowning its southern heights.

"That was formerly the abode of the MacDouglasses of Lorn—" remarked Sam.

"And has a peculiar interest to our family," added Sib; "since it was destroyed by the Campbells, who laid it in ruins, after having remorselessly massacred all its inhabitants!"

This fact seemed to win the particular approbation of Partridge, who quietly rubbed his hands in honour of the clan.

When they had passed the island of Kerera, the carriage took a narrow and slightly hilly road to the village of Clachan; from there they crossed the artificial isthmus, which, under the form of a bridge, spans the strait and unites the island of Seil with the mainland. Half an hour later, leaving the carriage at the foot of a ravine, the excursionists climbed the steep slopes of a hill, and seated themselves on the edge of the rocks overlooking the sea.

This time nothing could possibly obstruct the view of the western horizon; neither the isle of Easdale, nor that of Inish lying near Seil. Between the point of Ardalanish on the isle of Mull, one of the largest of the Hebrides to the north-east, and the island of Colonsay to the south-west, was a wide expanse of ocean, which would ere long be flooded with the crimson hues of sunset.

Miss Campbell, filled with her one absorbing thought, stood a little in front of the others; a few birds of prey

eagles and hawks, alone enlivened the stillness of the scene, hovering over their nests among the rocks.

Astronomically, at this time of year, and in these latitudes, the sun should set at ten minutes to eight o'clock, exactly in the direction of the point of Ardalanish. But a few weeks later it would be impossible to see it, as it would then set behind the island of Colonsay.

This evening, then, was well chosen, in point of time and place, for the observation of the phenomenon.

At this moment the sun was casting its rays obliquely on the cloudless horizon, and their eyes were scarcely able to bear the dazzling glare of its fiery disk, which the water reflected in a long train of light. Nevertheless, neither Miss Campbell nor her uncles would have consented to close their eyes—no! not even for a second.

But before the surface of the sun had touched the horizon, Miss Campbell uttered a cry of dismay!

A small cloud, slight as an arrow, and long as the flag of a man-of-war, had just appeared, and, floating across the solar disk, divided it into two unequal parts, and appeared to be sinking with it to the level of the sea.

It seemed as though the slightest breath of air would have been sufficient to drive it away! But no such breeze was forthcoming! And when the sun was reduced to a small arc, this light mist entirely circumscribed it. The Green Ray, lost in this little cloud, was hidden from the eyes of the intent observers.

CHAPTER IX.

DAME BESS'S TALK.

THE drive back was made in silence; Miss Campbell spoke not a word, and her uncles dared not interrupt her reverie. And yet it was not their fault if the unlucky cloud had appeared just in time to obscure the sun's last ray. After all, there was no need to despair; the fine weather must last for another six weeks, and if during the autumn they were not able to get one fine evening with a cloudless horizon, fortune was indeed against them.

However, it had been a splendid evening lost, and the barometer did not seem able to promise such another —for some time at least. Indeed, during the night the capricious index of the aneroid fell slightly back towards change; but though it was still fine weather for other people, it did not satisfy Miss Campbell.

The following day, the 8th of August, the sun was veiled in light mists, and the midday breeze was not strong enough to dissipate them. Towards evening the

sky was resplendent with brilliant hues; every shade of colour, from chrome-yellow to a sombre ultramarine, dyed the western horizon. Through the veil of fleecy cloud the sunset tinted the background of the coast with every phantom ray, save that which Miss Campbell desired so much to see.

And the two following days were the same, so that the carriage remained unused in the coach-house of the hotel, for what was the use of going to make an observation, which the state of the weather rendered impossible? The heights of Seil could be no more favoured than the shores of Oban, and it was better not to incur another disappointment.

Without being more vexed than could be expected, Miss Campbell contented herself by going in the evening to her room, pouting at this unobliging sun; and as she rested after her long walks, she would indulge in day-dreams. Of what? Of that legend attached to the Green Ray? Must she indeed see it in order to look clearly into her own heart? Into her own? perhaps not; but into that of others!

One day, accompanied by Dame Bess, Helena had carried her discomfiture to Dunolly Castle. From this place, at the foot of an old wall overgrown with ivy, nothing could be more lovely than the panorama formed by the Bay of Oban, the rugged aspect of Kerera, the isles dotted here and there in the western sea, and the

great island of Mull, upon whose rocky western coast the storms of the Atlantic first vent their fury.

And from here Miss Campbell would gaze upon the magnificent scene spread out before her eyes ; but did she see it ? Did not some memory persistently distract her attention ? In any case it certainly was not the image of Aristobulus Ursiclos. In truth, the young pedant would hardly have been gratified could he have heard the opinions of himself which Dame Bess so frankly expressed that afternoon.

"I don't like him ! No, I do not like him ! He only thinks of himself ! What sort of a figure would he cut at Helensburgh ? He belongs to the clan of 'Mac-Egotists,' or I am very much mistaken. How could my masters have ever thought of making him their nephew ! Partridge dislikes him as much as I do, and Partridge is no fool ! Now, come, miss, do you like him ?"

"Of whom are you speaking ?" asked the young girl, who had heard nothing of Dame Bess's previous speech.

"Of one whom you could never think of—were it only for the honour of the clan !"

"And who, then, is it that I may not think of ?"

"Why, to be sure, this Mr. Aristobulus, who had much better go and seek his fortune the other side of the Tweed, as if a Campbell ever need run after an Ursiclos !"

Dame Bess was not in the habit of mincing her words, but her feelings must have been highly wrought for her



Miss Campbell would gaze upon the magnificent scene.

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to oppose her masters' wishes, even for the sake of her young mistress. Besides, she felt sure that Helena was more than indifferent to this suitor. But she could hardly have guessed that this indifference was increased by a warmer feeling which her young mistress now experienced for another. Perhaps Dame Bess had a suspicion of the fact, when Miss Campbell asked her whether she had ever seen at Oban the young man whom the *Glengary* had so fortunately been able to rescue.

"No, miss," replied Dame Bess, "he must have left immediately; but Partridge thought he saw him—"

"When was that?"

"Yesterday, on the road to Dalmally. He was returning with a knapsack upon his back, like a travelling artist. Ah! that young man was very imprudent! His having allowed himself to be drawn into the Gulf of Coryvrechan speaks ill for his future. He will not always find a boat ready to come to his assistance, and one fine day he will come to grief."

"Do you think so, Bess? If he had been imprudent, he at least showed himself to be courageous, and in the midst of his peril his self-possession never appeared to leave him for a moment."

"That's very likely, miss," continued Dame Bess; "but surely the young man did not know that it was to you that he owed his rescue, or the day after our arrival at Oban he would at least have come and thanked you."

"Thanked me?" repeated Miss Campbell. "And why? I only did for him what I would have done for any one else, and what any one else would surely have done in my place!"

"Would you recognize him again?" asked Dame Bess, looking at the young girl.

"Yes," frankly replied Miss Campbell; "and I confess that his whole bearing, the calm courage which he exhibited when he stepped on deck, as though he had not just escaped death, and the affectionate words which he spoke to his old companion, made a great impression upon me."

"Upon my word," replied the worthy woman, "I could scarcely say what he is like; but at any rate, he is very different from this Mr. Ursiclos."

Miss Campbell smiled, without saying anything; she rose from her seat and stood for a moment, casting a last look at the distant heights of Mull; then, followed by Dame Bess, she took the road back to Oban.

That evening the sun set in a kind of luminous haze, like spangled tulle, and its last ray was absorbed in the evening mists. On her return to the hotel, Miss Campbell did little justice to the dinner which her uncles had ordered for her, and after a short walk along the beach, she retired to her room.

CHAPTER X.

A CROQUET PARTY.

IT must be confessed that the brothers were beginning to find the time hang rather heavily on their hands. Things were not going on at all as they would have liked. The visible *ennui* of their niece; the fancy which she had taken for being so much alone; the little encouragement she gave Mr. Ursiclos, about which, perhaps, that gentleman troubled himself less than they did: all these little incidents contributed to make their stay at Oban anything but agreeable. They could think of no device to break this monotony; in vain they watched the slightest atmospheric changes, and were obliged to console themselves with the hope that when once Miss Campbell's whim had been gratified she would doubtless be more tractable—at least to them.

It had happened that for the last two mornings Helena, more absent than ever, had forgotten to give

them their usual morning kiss, which always put them in a good humour for the rest of the day.

Meanwhile, the barometer, insensible to the uncles' recriminations, showed not the slightest inclination to predict any immediate change for the better in the weather, and though they tapped it at least ten times a day, the mercury refused to rise one iota. Oh, these barometers!

All at once an idea suddenly occurred to the brothers. On the afternoon of the 11th of August they thought of proposing to their niece a game of croquet to divert her thoughts, if possible, and though Aristobulus must be one of the party, Helena could not refuse to gratify their wishes in giving them this little pleasure.

It must be remarked that the brothers prided themselves on being first-rate players of this game, which, as one knows, is but the old game of "mall," revived and adapted to the requirements of young ladies.

Now there were at Oban several plots of ground laid out especially for croquet.

If at most sea-side places people are content with very indifferent accommodation, it proves less the requirements of the players than their want of enthusiasm in this time-honoured pastime. Here the plots were not gravel but well kept lawns, watered every evening with watering-engines, and rolled every morning till they were smooth as velvet. Small squares of stone

sunk in the ground were made for the hoops, and a narrow trench, a few inches deep, divided the different grounds.

How often the brothers had enviously watched the young people's manœuvres on these well-kept grounds! They were highly pleased when Miss Campbell agreed to their proposal, for they hoped in this way to rouse her from her apathy, and at the same time be at liberty to enjoy their favourite pastime in the midst of a crowd of spectators, for there would be plenty of lookers-on here, as well as at Helensburgh. The vain creatures!

Aristobulus, duly informed, had for once consented to postpone his scientific researches, and at the appointed time reached the place of contest. He pretended to be as much up in theory as in the practice of croquet, and to play as a *savant*, geometrician, physicist, or mathematician; in a word, by the rule of A + B.

Miss Campbell was obliged to take the young pedant as partner, which did not altogether please her; but how could it have been otherwise? How could she have been cruel enough to separate her uncles and place them in opposition to each other, they who were so united in thought, heart, and mind, and who never played, except together—no, she certainly could not do that!

"Miss Campbell," began Aristobulus, first thing, "I

am most happy to be your partner, and if you will allow me, I will explain to you the determinative cause of the strokes."

"Mr. Ursiclos," replied Helena, interrupting him, "we must let my uncles win."

"Win?"

"Yes. Without seeming to do so."

"But, Miss Campbell—"

"It will make them so vexed to lose."

"But—allow me," persisted Aristobulus. "I understand this game geometrically, and am justly proud of the fact! I have calculated the combination of lines, the geometrical value of the curves, and I think I have some pretensions—"

"I have no other pretension," interrupted Miss Campbell, "than that of making myself agreeable to my opponents; besides, I warn you, they are first-rate players, and I don't think after all that your science will beat their skill."

"We shall see by-and-by!" muttered Aristobulus, whom no consideration whatever could have persuaded to allow himself to be voluntarily beaten—not even to please Miss Campbell.

Meanwhile, the box, containing the hoops, mallets, and balls, had been brought and placed on the ground.



The ball skilfully played.

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The nine hoops were adjusted in the little square flags, and posts driven in at either end of the ground.

"Now let us draw lots!" said Sam.

The marks were placed in a hat, and each player drew one out hap-hazard.

Fate decreed the following colours for the order of the players: a blue mallet and ball to Sam, a red one to Ursiclos, a yellow one to Sib, and a green to Miss Campbell.

"In anticipation of the ray of the same colour," said she, "this is a good omen."

It was Sam's turn first, and he started the game after taking a good pinch of snuff with his partner.

It was a sight worth looking at, to see him, with his body not too straight, nor too bent, his head a little on one side, so as to be sure of striking his ball on the right spot, his hands placed one above the other on the mallet, the left above, and the right beneath, the knees slightly bent to counterbalance the force of the blow, the left foot placed alongside the ball, and the right a little behind. A perfect type of the accomplished gentleman croquet-player.

Then raising his mallet, and with it gently describing a semicircle, Sam struck the ball placed eighteen inches from the post, and did not require to make use of the privilege of a second start allowed for the first stroke; the ball, skilfully played, had passed through the first

and second hoops, and only just missed the third by coming in contact with the side.

This was a very good beginning, and a murmur of applause ran through the spectators, who were standing looking on from the other side of the boundary-mark.

Aristobulus, in his turn, was less fortunate, through awkwardness, or ill-luck; he was obliged to commence three times before he could send his ball through the first hoop, and then it missed the second.

"It is very probable," he observed to Miss Campbell, "that the calibre of this ball is not quite exact, and in that case the centre of gravity, placed eccentrically, throws it out of its course—"

"Your turn next, Uncle Sib," said Miss Campbell, without listening to a word of this scientific explanation.

Sib was worthy of his brother, his ball passed through the first two hoops, and stopped close to Aristobulus's ball, which he made use of to get through the third, after he had roqueted it. Then he again roqueted the young *savant*, who looked, as much as to say, "only wait a bit!"

Finally, after bringing the two balls close together, he placed his foot on his own, and with a vigorous stroke sent his adversary's ball flying far beyond the boundary.

Aristobulus was obliged to go after his ball; but he

did so in a most composed manner, with the air of a philosopher, and then awaited his turn in the attitude of a general, who meditates a decisive blow.

Miss Campbell took her green ball, and skilfully sent it through the first two hoops.

Thus the game went on, while the brothers had decidedly the advantage, and did great havoc among their opponents' balls! They made little signs, and understood each other at a glance, without needing to speak, and finally they were a long way ahead, to the great satisfaction of their niece, but to the infinite disgust of Aristobulus.

Miss Campbell, seeing that she was sufficiently distanced by her uncles, now began to play more seriously, and showed much more skill than her partner, who, however, did not spare her his scientific advice.

"The angle of reflection," said he, "is equal to the angle of incidence, and that ought to show you the direction the ball will take after being struck; thus you must take advantage of—"

"Why don't you take advantage of it yourself, Mr. Ursiclos?" replied Miss Campbell. "Here, I am three hoops in front of you!"

In fact, Aristobulus remained sadly behind; ten times he had attempted to pass the centre hoop, without succeeding; he then began to complain of its position,

and after taking it out and replacing it, he tried his fate once more.

But again fortune was unfavourable. Each time his ball would strike against the sides of the hoop, instead of going through.

Miss Campbell indeed might well have complained of her partner. She played very well, and deserved the compliments which her uncles did not spare. Nothing could have been more charming than to see her thoroughly enjoying the game, so well adapted for the display of feminine graces, her right foot half raised, in order to hold her ball when she was croqueting another, her arms coquettishly rounded as she lifted her mallet, the animation of her pretty face, and the graceful sway of her figure, made a most fascinating picture! and yet Aristobulus saw nothing of it.

It must be owned that the position of the game enraged the young *savant;* in fact, the brothers were now so far ahead that it would have been difficult to overtake them; and yet the chances in croquet are so unexpected that the game is never lost until it is won.

Such was the unequal position of affairs, when a ludicrous incident occurred.

Aristobulus at last found an opportunity to croquet Uncle Sam's ball, which had just repassed the central hoop, before which he himself was obstinately detained.



Nothing could have been more charming than to see her thoroughly enjoying the game.

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With evident spite, although he endeavoured to appear calm to the eyes of the spectators, he now determined to make a master-stroke, and retaliate on his opponent, by sending him beyond the boundary-line. Placing his ball close to Uncle Sam's he took pains to see that it touched, smoothing the grass down with the greatest care, then placing his left foot upon it, and lifting his mallet as high as possible, to give full force to the blow, he brought it sharply down.

A cry escaped him! A howl of pain! The mallet had struck not the ball, but the foot of the unlucky player, and there he was hopping on one leg, and uttering groans, very natural no doubt, but a trifle ludicrous.

The brothers ran up to him. Fortunately, as the leather of the boot had deadened the force of the blow, the contusion was not serious. But Aristobulus thought proper thus to account for his misadventure,—

"The radius, represented by the mallet," said he, with a learned air, though unable to repress a grimace, "described a circle concentric to that which should have just touched the surface of the ground, because that radius was a little too short. Hence this blow—"

"Well, sir, shall we give up the game?" asked Miss Campbell.

"Give up the game!" exclaimed Aristobulus. "Confess ourselves beaten? Never! Judging from the

formula of the calculation of probabilities, it will yet be found that—"

"Just so, let us continue," abruptly replied Miss Campbell.

But all the formulas of the calculation of probabilities would have given but little chance to the opponents of the two brothers. Already Sam was a "rover," that is to say, his ball having gone through all the hoops, he had struck the post, and had now but to help his partner by croqueting and roqueting any ball that he pleased.

In fact, a few more strokes definitely decided the game, and the brothers triumphed, but modestly as became conquerors. As to Aristobulus, notwithstanding his pretensions, he had not even succeeded in getting through the central hoop.

No doubt Miss Campbell wanted to appear more annoyed than she really was, and giving her ball a vigorous blow, she sent it flying, without heed as to its direction.

The ball shot right out of their plot towards the sea, rebounded on a pebble, and as Aristobulus would have said, its weight, multiplied by the square of its assistant velocity, carried it right out of the grounds.

Unlucky stroke!

A young artist was there sitting before his easel, making a sketch of the sea; the ball struck full on his



"It is usual to give notice before beginning a bombardment."

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canvas, smeared its green colour, with all the tints on the pallet, which it grazed in passing, and overturned the easel.

The artist turned round, and calmly remarked,—

"It is usual to give notice before beginning a bombardment. It appears we are not in safety here!"

Miss Campbell, having a presentiment of this accident before it occurred, ran towards the boundary-line.

"Oh! sir," said she, addressing the artist, "please excuse my awkwardness!"

The young man rose and smilingly bowed to the beautiful girl, who blushed deeply as she made her apologies.

It was the hero of the Gulf of Coryvrechan!

CHAPTER XI.

OLIVER SINCLAIR.

OLIVER SINCLAIR was a "bonnie lad," to make use of a Scotch expression, in speaking of a gallant, sprightly youth. The last scion of a good Edinburgh family, this young Athenian of the Athens of the north was the son of an old councillor in this capital. Early left an orphan, he had been brought up by an uncle, one of the four baillies of the municipal administration, had made good use of his time at the University, and at the age of twenty, being possessor of a small independent fortune, and wishing to see something of the world, he visited the principal states of Europe, India, and America; the celebrated *Edinburgh Review* now and again published notes of his travels. Being an accomplished artist, he might have sold his pictures at a high price, had he liked. He was also a poet, when the whim took him, and who is not, at an age when all existence smiles

upon one?—warm-hearted, and of an artistic nature, he was made to please, and this he did without effort or affectation on his part.

It would have been an easy matter for him to have found a wife in Edinburgh, where an accomplished, amiable, well-bred young man, with a handsome person, could not fail to find more than one heiress to his liking.

And yet Oliver Sinclair, at the age of twenty-six, did not appear to have felt any inclination to change his state. Was it that the path of life seemed too narrow for two to walk together? Not so; but likely enough he thought himself better able, as a single man, to indulge his tastes for art and travel.

Nevertheless, Oliver Sinclair might well have inspired any fair daughter of Scotland with more than ordinary liking. His elegant figure, his frank countenance, his manly yet gentle bearing and cheerful manners, made him altogether a fascinating character; but being no coxcomb, this fact had never occurred to him, or else he had never felt inclined to matrimony. Moreover, if he were calculated to inspire admiration among the ladies of Edinburgh, he was none the less liked by his friends at the University, and was one of those who, according to the old saying, never turned his back on friend or foe.

And yet, to-day, it must be admitted that he was

turning his back upon Miss Campbell, who, it is true, was neither friend nor foe. In that position he had been unable to see the ball, which the young girl had so vigorously discharged; hence the disastrous effect on his canvas, and the overthrow of all his apparatus.

At the first glance, Miss Campbell had recognized her hero of the Coryvrechan; but the hero did not in the least recognize the young passenger of the *Glengary*. It was scarcely likely that during the journey from Scarba to Oban, he had even seen Miss Campbell on board. Most certainly had he known the part she had personally taken in his rescue, were it only out of politeness, he would have thanked her; but he was as yet unaware of that fact, and probably would always remain so.

Indeed, that very day, Miss Campbell forbade, yes, positively forbade, her uncles as well as Dame Bess and Partridge, to make any allusion, before this young man, to what had taken place on board the *Glengary* before the rescue.

Meanwhile, after the accident, the brothers had rejoined their niece, more vexed if possible than she, and they began to offer the young artist their personal apologies, when he interrupted them, saying,—

"Gentlemen, I beg you—it is really not worth mentioning!"

"But sir," persisted Sib, "we are deeply grieved."

"And if the disaster is irreparable, as we fear it is—" added Sam.

"It is a mere trifle," replied the young man, smiling. "A daub, nothing more, to which this avenging ball did fit justice!"

Oliver Sinclair said this with so much good-humour that the brothers would willingly have shaken hands with him without further ceremony; at any rate they thought it only polite to introduce themselves.

"Mr. Samuel Melville," said one.

"Mr. Sebastian Melville," said the other.

"And their niece, Miss Campbell," added Helena, who considered it no breach of etiquette to introduce herself.

This was an invitation to the young man to state his name.

"Miss Campbell, and gentlemen," said he, as seriously as possible, "I may tell you that I call myself 'post,' after one of your croquet-sticks, since I have been a mark for your ball; but my name is really Oliver Sinclair."

"Mr. Sinclair," replied Miss Campbell, who hardly knew how to take this answer, "please accept my apologies."

"And ours too," added the brothers.

"I assure you, Miss Campbell," replied Oliver Sinclair, "it is not worth mentioning. I was trying to get an effect of the foam on the waves, and it is probable that your ball, like the sponge of—I forget what painter of antiquity, thrown across his picture, will have produced the effect which my brush was trying in vain to render."

This was said so amiably that Miss Campbell and her uncles could hardly help smiling.

But as to the canvas which Oliver Sinclair picked up, it was quite spoilt, and the work must be begun afresh.

We may as well observe that Aristobulus did not trouble himself to add his apologies.

The game over, the young *savant*, highly annoyed at being unable to make his practical ability accord with his theoretical knowledge, had returned to his hotel.

They would probably not see him for two or three days, as he was going to Luing Island, one of the smallest of the Hebrides, situated to the south of the isle of Seil, and the rich slate quarries of which he wanted to study from a geological point of view.

Thus their conversation was carried on without any interruption in the way of explanatory remarks, which he would have been sure to make, on the tension of trajectories or other questions relative to the accident.

Oliver Sinclair soon found that he was not altogether unknown to the visitors of the Caledonian Hotel, and he then learnt that they were acquainted with the incidents of the passage.

"What!" exclaimed he, "were you really on board the *Glengary*, which fished me up so luckily?"

"Yes, Mr. Sinclair."

"And you frightened us nicely," added Sib, "when, by the greatest chance, we saw your boat among the breakers of the Coryvrechan."

"A most providential chance," added Sam; "and probably had it not been for the interposition of—"

Here Miss Campbell made her uncle understand by a sign that she did not intend to pose as a deliverer, nor would she accept that *rôle* at any price.

"But, Mr. Sinclair," continued Sam, "how could the old seaman, who was with you, have been imprudent enough to venture so near the gulf—"

"The danger of which he must well have known, since he belonged to this part of the country?" added Sib.

"You must not blame him, gentlemen," replied Oliver Sinclair; "it was entirely my imprudence, mine alone, and at one time I thought I should have to reproach myself with being the cause of the honest fellow's death! But there were such wondrous colours on the surface

of the eddies where the sea looked like an immense piece of guipure lace thrown over blue silk, that, without giving another thought as to probable danger, I set out in search of some new shade of colour in the midst of these waters, impregnated with light, and so I went on, and on! The old fisherman, knowing the danger, remonstrated with me, and wanted to turn back towards Jura, but I scarcely listened to him; and at last our boat was caught by the tide, and irresistibly drawn towards the gulf. We made every effort to clear ourselves. A heavy sea disabled my companion, and left him powerless to help me, and certainly, had it not been for the timely arrival of the *Glengary*, the skill of her captain, and humanity of the passengers, the fisherman and I would soon have passed into the legendary state, and would be included in the obituary of the Coryvrechan!"

Miss Campbell listened without saying a word, and now and then raised her beautiful eyes on the speaker, who did not embarrass her by returning her glance. She could not help smiling when he spoke of his chase, or rather of his fishing for marine tints. Was she not also engaged in a search somewhat less perilous, at the same time, the search for a celestial tint, the pursuit of the Green Ray?

The brothers could not refrain from mentioning the

motive which had brought them to Oban, which was in fact the observation of the physical phenomenon, the nature of which they did their best to explain to the young artist.

"The Green Ray!" exclaimed Oliver Sinclair.

"Have you already seen it?" quickly asked the young girl. "Have you already seen it?"

"No, Miss Campbell, I never even knew that such a ray was to be seen. No, in truth, but now I am all anxiety to see it, and the sun shall not set again without having me for witness! By St. Dunstan, I will not draw another stroke till I have seen the colour of its last ray!"

It was difficult to know whether Oliver Sinclair spoke in jest or earnest, or if he were merely giving vent to artistic enthusiasm. At the same time Miss Campbell had a kind of presentiment that the young man was not joking.

"Mr. Sinclair," she resumed, "the Green Ray is not my particular property! it shines for every one, and loses nothing of its value because more than one see it at the same time! If you like, we might try and see it together."

"Most willingly, Miss Campbell."

"But you will have to be very patient."

"We will be perfect models—"

"And not be afraid of hurting your eyesight," said Sam.

"The Green Ray is well worth that risk," replied Sinclair; "and I promise you I will not leave Oban till I have seen it."

"We have already been once to the island of Seil to observe this ray," said Miss Campbell, but a little cloud hid the horizon just as the sun was setting."

"How unfortunate."

"Unfortunate indeed, Mr. Sinclair, for since that evening the sky has never been clear enough for us."

"We shall have more fine evenings yet, Miss Campbell. The summer is not over, and before the bad weather comes on, believe me, the sun will have the charity to show us his Green Ray."

"To tell the truth, Mr. Sinclair," continued Miss Campbell, "we should certainly have seen it on the evening of the 2nd of August, just on the horizon of the Coryvrechan Straits, had not our attention been distracted by a certain rescue."

"Indeed, Miss Campbell," replied Sinclair; "alas! that I should have been unfortunate enough to divert your attention at such a moment! My imprudence cost you the sight of the Green Ray! Then it is I who must humbly apologize to you, and assure you of my regret for my inopportune interference. It shall not happen again."

And thus they talked of one thing and another on

their way back to the Caledonian Hotel, where Oliver Sinclair happened to have taken rooms the previous evening on his return from an excursion to the environs of Dalmally. The young gentleman, whose frank and lively manner by no means displeased the brothers—far from it—was then led to speak of Edinburgh and of his uncle, the Baillie Patrick Oldimer, whom it happened that the brothers had known for many years, distance alone having suspended the acquaintance between the two families.

Thus they felt perfectly at home with each other, and Oliver Sinclair was invited to renew friendship with the Melvilles. As he had no reason for leaving Oban, he declared himself more ready than ever to remain and join in the search for the famous ray.

It happened after this that Miss Campbell and her uncles frequently met him on the beach ; they made observations on the weather together, and ten times a day looked at the barometer, which showed some feeble signs of rising ; in fact, on the morning of the 14th of August the amiable instrument was more propitious than ever.

With what delight Oliver Sinclair, that day, brought the news to Miss Campbell. A sky pure as the eye of a Madonna, an azure vault, which shaded off from deep indigo to ultramarine, with not the slightest haze to be

seen anywhere, gave prospect of a splendid evening, and a sunset which would have entranced any astronomer!

"If we do not see our ray at sunset," said Oliver Sinclair, "it will be because we are blind."

"Uncles," replied Miss Campbell, "you quite understand we are to go this evening?"

It was then agreed that they should set out before dinner for the island of Seil, which accordingly they did about five o'clock.

The carriage took them along the picturesque road to Glachan; Miss Campbell radiant with delight, Oliver Sinclair in high spirits, and the brothers partaking of the general good-humour. One would have thought that they were taking the sun with them in their carriage, and that the four horses drawing them were the hippogriffs of Apollo's chariot!

Having reached the island of Seil, the enthusiastic observers found an horizon without the slightest obstacle to mar its purity. They went and seated themselves at the extreme end of a narrow headland which separated two creeks along the coast and jutted a mile into the sea.

"At last we are going to catch this capricious ray which is so chary about letting itself be seen!" said Sinclair.



Along the picturesque road to Glachan.

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"I believe so—" replied Sam.

"I am certain of it—" added Sib.

"And for my part, I hope so," said Miss Campbell, looking at the clear sea and cloudless sky.

In fact, everything seemed to predict that at sunset the phenomenon would show itself in all its splendour.

Already the sinking sun was but a few degrees above the horizon; its crimson disk tinged the western sky with ruddy light, and cast a long train of dazzling brightness over the peaceful waters.

Silently waiting for the apparition, and as though entranced by the close of this glorious day, they watched the sun as it slowly sank like a ball of fire. All at once an involuntary cry escaped Miss Campbell, and it was followed by an anxious exclamation, which neither the brothers nor Oliver Sinclair could repress.

A sailing-boat doubled the island of Easdale, lying at the foot of Seil, and slowly made towards the west, its sail spread like a screen, extended above the horizon. Would it hide the sun just as its orb dipped beneath the waves?

It was a matter of seconds. There was no time to turn back or run in either direction, in order to see the point of contact; the narrowness of the headland would not allow a sufficient angle to permit them to get any other view of the sun.

Miss Campbell, in despair at this *contretemps*, ran to-and-fro on the rocks; Sinclair made frantic gestures to the occupants of the boat, and shouted to them to take in their sail.

But all in vain! They neither saw nor heard him. A light breeze, aided by the tide, was carrying the boat steadily towards the west.

Just as the upper rim of the sun's disk was about to disappear, the boat passed in front of it and quite hid it behind its opaque sail.

Vain expectation! This time the Green Ray had been launched from a cloudless horizon, but had been intercepted by the sail before it could reach the promontory, from which so many eyes were anxiously watching.

Miss Campbell, Oliver Sinclair, and the brothers, intensely disappointed, and more irritated perhaps than this mischance warranted, stood as if petrified, forgetting even to move away, as they anathematized the boat and her occupants.

Meanwhile, this unlucky boat had come into a small bay in the island of Seil, at the very foot of the promontory, and at this moment a passenger landed from it, leaving on board two sailors who had brought him from Luing Island; then he walked along the beach and climbed the rocks, in order to reach the summit of the point.



Sinclair made frantic gestures.

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Evidently the intruder must have recognized the group of observers standing on the plateau, for he bowed to them familiarly.

"Mr. Ursiclos!" exclaimed Miss Campbell.

"He! can it be he?" cried her two uncles.

"And who may this gentleman be?" said Oliver Sinclair to himself.

It was indeed Aristobulus in person, who was returning after a scientific tour of some days from the island of Luing.

How he was received by those, whose dearest wish he had just succeeded in frustrating, need not be told here.

The brothers, forgetting all etiquette, never even thought of introducing him to Oliver Sinclair. In presence of Helena's discomfiture, they paid little attention to the suitor of their choice.

Miss Campbell, with her little hands clenched, her arms crossed on her breast, and her eyes sparkling with indignation, looked at him without saying a word. Then at last these words escaped her,—

"Mr. Ursiclos, you should have known better than to have played us such a trick!"

CHAPTER XII.

NEW PLANS.

THE return to Oban was hardly as pleasant as the drive to Seil had been; they had set out confident of success, and were going back defeated.

If Miss Campbell's disappointment could possibly have been increased, it was owing to the fact of its being caused by Aristobulus Ursiclos. She had some reason to blame this great culprit and vent her wrath on his head, and she made good use of the privilege. Her uncles would have been very ill-advised had they tried to defend him. No! it was perfectly evident that this clumsy fellow, of whom they were little thinking, had taken the boat and sailed right in front of the sunset on purpose, and such a wrong could never be forgiven.

Needless to say that after this rating, Aristobulus, who tried to excuse himself by ridiculing the idea of the Green Ray, returned by boat to Oban, and it was well he did, for probably he would not have been offered a seat in the carriage, nor one on the box even.

Thus twice the sun had set under conditions quite favourable to the observation of the phenomenon, and twice Miss Campbell had exposed her eyesight to the dazzling glare, all in vain! First of all the rescue of Oliver Sinclair, and then Aristobulus's boat had caused her to miss opportunities which might be long in recurring! It is true the circumstances were not the same in both cases, and Miss Campbell made excuses for the one as much as she blamed the other, so who could have accused her of partiality?

The following day Oliver Sinclair was sauntering dreamily along the sea-shore.

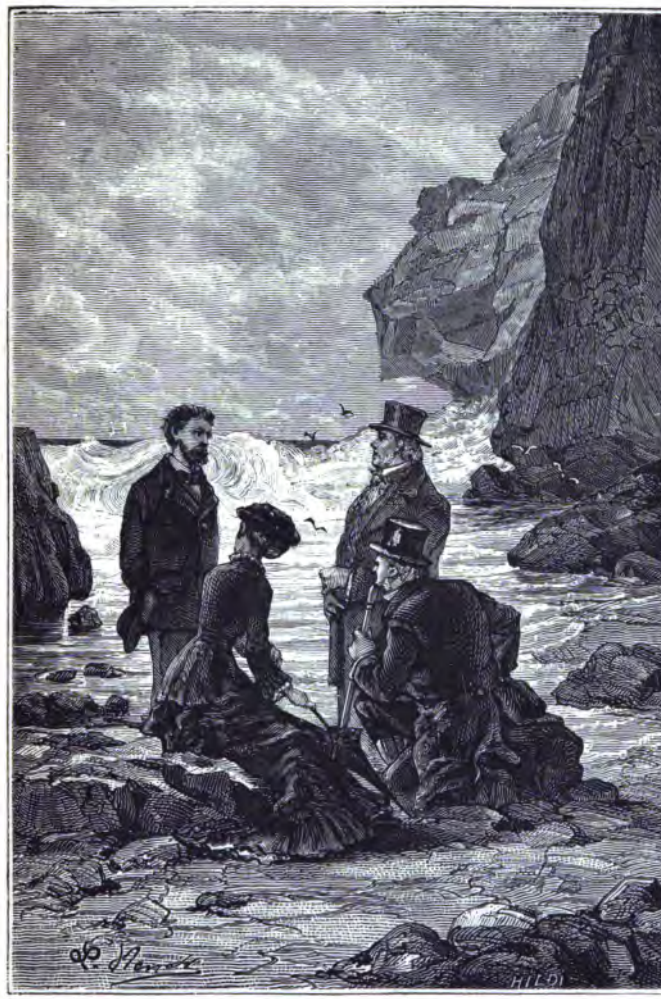
"Who was this Mr. Ursiclos? A relation of Miss Campbell's, or simply a friend? At any rate, he was evidently on very familiar terms with the family from the way in which the young lady scolded him for his awkwardness. But what could it matter to Oliver Sinclair? If he wished to know, he had but to ask either of the two brothers." This was precisely what the young man did not care to do.

However, he had plenty of opportunities of doing so, scarcely a day passed without meeting the brothers —who could flatter himself that he had ever seen the one without the other?—and sometimes their niece with them, walking along the shore. They talked of all kinds of things, but especially of the weather, which in

the open air is not always a mere excuse for something to say. Would they ever get another perfect evening, to enable them to try their fortune at the island of Seil once more? They had their doubts about it; indeed, since those two fine days, the 2nd and 14th of August, the sky had been very uncertain; there were nothing but storm-clouds, hazy horizons, and twilight mists, enough to drive to despair any student of astronomy anxious to make a survey of some particular corner of the celestial globe!

Why not confess that Oliver Sinclair was now bewitched with the Green Ray quite as much as Miss Campbell? He had entered into the spirit of the search with the beautiful young girl, with her he had studied the realms of space, and he followed up the fancy with no less eagerness, not to say impatience, than did his young companion. Ah! he was not an Aristobulus Ursiclos with his head in the clouds of lofty science, treating with contempt this simple optical phenomenon! They both understood each other, and both were anxious to be of that rare number of privileged beings to whom the Green Ray might reveal itself.

"We will see it, Miss Campbell; we will see it," repeated Oliver Sinclair, "even if I have to go and light it up myself! In fact, it was my fault that you missed seeing it the first time, and I am as much to blame as that Mr. Ursiclos—a relation of yours, I believe?"



They talked of all kinds of things.

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"No. My betrothed, it would seem," replied Miss Campbell, walking on somewhat hurriedly to her uncles, who were a little way in front of them.

Her betrothed! It was singular the effect this reply, especially the tone in which it was made, had on Oliver Sinclair. After all why should this young pedant not be her fiancé? At any rate, under those circumstances, his presence at Oban might be accounted for. Because he had been clumsy enough to come between Miss Campbell and the sun, it did not follow—What did not follow? Oliver Sinclair would perhaps have been at a loss to say.

Besides, two days later, Aristobulus Ursiclos again turned up; Oliver often saw him in company with the brothers, who would not altogether treat him coldly, and he seemed to be on the best of terms with them. The young artist and the *savant* had met on one or two occasions, and the brothers at last remembered to introduce them to each other.

"Mr. Aristobulus Ursiclos, of Dumfries."

"Mr. Oliver Sinclair, of Edinburgh!"

The young men bowed stiffly to each other, evidently there was not much sympathy between these two characters. The one examined the sky as though he would bring down the stars, the other as if to forecast the weather; the artist made no attempt to figure on the

pedestal of art, the *savant* made for himself a pedestal of science, on which he might strike attitudes.

As to Miss Campbell, she treated Aristobulus with the greatest coolness. If he were present, she quite ignored him; if he happened to pass her, she turned her head the other way; in a word, as has been before remarked, she most distinctly cut him, and her uncles had some trouble to smooth matters over. However this may be, it was their opinion that all would turn out well, especially if this whimsical ray would but allow itself to be seen.

Meanwhile, Aristobulus eyed Oliver Sinclair over his spectacles, a frequent habit with short-sighted people, who want to look without seeming to do so; and what he saw—the young man's assiduous attention to Miss Campbell, and the amiable manner in which she always received him—was not altogether calculated to please him, but highly confident in his own powers of attraction, he maintained a very proper reserve.

Meantime, this changeable weather was enough to try any one's patience to the utmost. In the hope of seeing a clear horizon at sunset, were it but for a few moments, they made two or three excursions to the island of Seil, in which Aristobulus could not find time to join. But all in vain! the 23rd of August arrived without any sight of the phenomenon.

This fancy had become a fixed and besetting idea, which left no room for anything else; they dreamt of it night and day, till one might have feared it would engender some new kind of monomania. Under this one intense thought, colours all seemed to be transformed into one shade: the blue sky became green, the roads were green, the sea-shore was green, the rocks were green, water and wine seemed green as absinthe; even the brothers imagined they were dressed in green, and felt like two big paroquets, taking green snuff out of a green snuff-box. In fact, it was a case of green fever! They were all seized with a kind of daltonism, and oculists might have had wherewithal to make interesting notes in their ophthalmological reviews. This state of things could not last long.

Fortunately Oliver Sinclair hit upon an idea.

"Miss Campbell," said he one day, "and you, gentlemen, it seems to me that, considering everything, Oban is not the best place possible for our observation of the phenomenon in question."

"And whose fault is that?" replied Miss Campbell, looking at the two culprits, who held down their heads.

"Here, there is no sea-horizon!" continued the young artist, "so that we are obliged to go as far as Seil to get one, at the risk too of not arriving there at the right moment.

"This is very evident," said Miss Campbell; "in fact, I don't know why my uncles ever thought of choosing this horrible place for our experiment."

"My dear Helena!" exclaimed her Uncle Sam, scarcely knowing what to say, "we thought—"

"Yes, we thought—the same thing—" added Uncle Sib, coming to his brother's assistance.

"That the sun would most certainly set every evening upon the horizon at Oban—"

"Since Oban is situated on the sea-coast!"

"And you thought wrong, uncles," replied Miss Campbell; "very wrong, indeed, as it never sets there."

"Just so," resumed Sam, "it is those tiresome islands which obstruct our view."

"You really don't intend to have them blown up?" asked Miss Campbell.

"It should have been done long ago, had it been possible," replied Sib, in a decided tone.

"Nevertheless, we cannot go and take up our abode on the island of Seil," observed Sam.

"And why not?"

"If you absolutely wish it, dear Helena—"

"Yes, absolutely."

"Let us go, then!" said the brothers, with an air of resignation. And these two submissive beings declared themselves ready to leave Oban at once.

Here Oliver Sinclair interposed.

"Miss Campbell," said he, "unless you have set your heart upon it, I think you might do better than take up your quarters at Seil."

"Let us hear your opinion, Mr. Sinclair; and if your advice is good, my uncles will not refuse to follow it."

The brothers nodded assent with an automatical movement so identical that never perhaps had they looked so much alike.

"The island of Seil," continued Oliver Sinclair, "is most certainly not adapted for a lengthened stay, not even for a few days. If you have to exercise your patience, Miss Campbell, it will but be for your ultimate benefit. Besides, I have noticed at Seil that the view of the sea is somewhat limited by the configuration of the coast. If, by chance, we had to wait longer than we thought for, and our stay were prolonged for some weeks, it might happen that the sun, which is now retrograding towards the west, would at last set behind Colonsay, or Oransay, or even Islay, and our observation would again be baffled, for want of a sufficiently large expanse of sea."

"Truly," replied Miss Campbell, "this would be the last blow to our ill-fortune—"

"And which we can perhaps avoid by looking for a place beyond this archipelago, bounded only by the wide Atlantic."

"And do you know of such a place, Mr. Sinclair?" eagerly asked Miss Campbell.

The brothers anxiously awaited the young man's answer. What would he reply? Where on earth would their niece's caprice finally land them? Upon what farmost extremity of the globe would they have to settle themselves in order to satisfy her whim?

Oliver Sinclair's reply at once reassured them.

"Miss Campbell," said he, "not far from here, there is an island which seems to me to be just the place. It is situated beyond the heights of Mull, which shut in the western horizon of Oban, and is one of the smallest of the Hebrides, standing out farthest into the Atlantic; it is the charming island of Iona."

"Iona!" cried Miss Campbell, "Iona, uncles, oh! why are we not there now?"

"We will be there to-morrow," replied Sib.

"To-morrow, before sunset," added Sam.

"Let us be off, then," said Miss Campbell, "and if we do not find at Iona a wide expanse of sea, you must understand, uncles, we will search for some other point on the coast, from John o' Groat's to the Land's End, and if that does not do—"

"It is very simple," said Oliver Sinclair, "we will go round the world!"

CHAPTER XIII.

THE GLORIES OF THE SEA.

IF any one showed signs of vexation at the decision arrived at, it was Mr. MacFyne, the hotel-keeper; had it been possible, he would have had every island lying in front of Oban blown up. The worthy man had to console himself, when his visitors were gone, by regretting that he had ever taken in such a party of monomaniacs.

At eight o'clock in the morning Miss Campbell, her uncles, Dame Bess, and Partridge, embarked on the "swift steamer *Pioneer*," as said the prospectus, which made the trip round Mull, calling at Iona and Staffa, and returning to Oban the same evening.

Oliver Sinclair had gone down before them to the quay, and was awaiting his friends on the foot-bridge, between the paddle-boards of the steamer.

Aristobulus Ursiclos was not to be thought of for this

trip, and yet the brothers were obliged to acquaint him with their sudden departure; it was only common politeness, and they were the most polite of men.

Aristobulus received the communication very coolly, and merely thanked them without saying a word as to his own plans.

Thus the brothers had gone off, contenting themselves with the thought that, though their protégé was extremely reserved, and their niece somewhat averse to him, yet all would be changed one fine autumn evening after a beautiful sunset, which Iona could not fail to give them.

All the passengers being on board, the moorings were cast after the third shrill whistle had sounded, and the *Pioneer* steamed out of the bay, taking a southerly course for the straits of Kerera.

There were a good many tourists on board, attracted by this charming excursion round Mull, which takes place once or twice a week, but Miss Campbell and her companions were to leave them at the first landing-place.

They were all impatience to reach Iona, this new field for their observation. The weather was splendid, the sea calm as a lake, and there was every promise of a fine passage. If that same evening did not bring them



The *Pioneer* steamed out of the bay.

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the realization of their wishes, well! they would wait patiently, after having settled down on the island. There, at least, the curtain was always raised and the scenery ready, so that nothing but bad weather could come in the way.

They would reach their destination before midday. The *Pioneer* passed through the straits of Kerera, doubled the southern point of the island, steamed across the wide mouth of the Frith of Lorn, left behind Colonsay and its ancient abbey, built in the fourteenth century by the celebrated Lords of the Isles, and ranged along the southern coast of Mull, lying in the open sea, like an immense crab with one claw slightly curved towards the south-west. At one moment Ben More, clad with heather, lifted its rugged head three thousand two hundred feet above the range of distant hills, its rounded summit overlooking those pasture-lands, sharply divided by the imposing mass of Ardalanish point.

Then the picturesque island of Iona stood out against the north-west, almost at the end of the southern point of Mull, and beyond lay the vast Atlantic.

"Are you fond of the sea, Mr. Sinclair?" asked Miss Campbell of her young companion, who sat near her on the deck, gazing at the lovely prospect.

"Am I fond of it, Miss Campbell?" replied he. "Yes, and I am not one of those miserable individuals

who find the sight of it monotonous! To me, nothing is more varied than its appearance, but one must see it under its different aspects. The sea takes so many shades of colour, marvellously blended, that it is perhaps more difficult for an artist to produce an effect at the same time uniform and varied, than to paint a face, however changeable the expression may be."

"Yes," said Helena, "it changes incessantly with the slightest breath of wind, and alters every hour of the day, according to the light with which it is impregnated."

"Look at it now, Miss Campbell; it is perfectly calm! Does it not look like a lovely face asleep, in its unalterable serenity? It has not a wrinkle, it is young, it is beautiful! or, if you prefer it, it is an immense mirror, which reflects the sky, and in which God Himself is visible!"

"A mirror often dimmed by the breath of tempests!" added Miss Campbell.

"And," continued Oliver Sinclair, "it is that which makes the great variety, in the aspect of the ocean! Let but a little wind arise, the face will change, will grow wrinkled, and hoary with feathery spray; it will look old in a moment, but it will still be grand with its fitful phosphorescence, and its foam-flecked waves."

"Do you think, Mr. Sinclair," asked Miss Campbell,

"that any artist, however clever he may be, could reproduce all the beauties of the sea on canvas?"

"No, indeed, Miss Campbell, and how could he? The sea has really no colour of its own; it is but an immense reflection of the sky; if it is blue, it is not a blue that one can paint; if it is green, there is no green that will match it! It should rather be depicted in a tempest, when it is dark, gloomy and livid, when it seems as though sky and sea were blended! Ah! Miss Campbell, the more I see of it, the more I find the ocean sublime! Ocean! that word says everything! It is immensity! Unfathomable depths below it are regions beside which ours are deserts! as Darwin says. What, compared to it, are the vastest continents? Mere islands surrounded by its waters! it covers four-fifths of the globe! By incessant circulation, it is nourished by the vapours which it emits. Yes, the ocean is infinite, an infinity one cannot see, but feel, infinite as the space it reflects in its waters, as says one of the poets."

"I like to hear you speak with such enthusiasm' Mr. Sinclair," said Miss Campbell, "and I quite share your feelings! Yes, I love the sea as much as you do."

"And you will not be afraid of braving its perils?" asked Oliver.

"No, indeed, I shall not be afraid! Can one be afraid of what one admires?"

"Would you like to be a daring explorer?"

"Perhaps so, Mr. Sinclair," replied Helena. "At any rate, of all the accounts of travels I have read, I prefer those relating to the discovery of distant seas. How often I have travelled over them with the great navigators! How often I have wandered into the great unknown, in imagination only, it is true, but I know nothing more enviable than the position of those heroes who have accomplished such grand discoveries."

"Yes, Miss Campbell, in the history of all ages, what is there more worthy of admiration? Only to think of crossing the Atlantic for the first time with Columbus, the Pacific with Magellan, the polar seas with Parry, Franklin, and many others! I can never see a ship, man-of-war, trading-vessel, or even a simple fishing-smack, set out on any journey without my whole heart going with it. I think I was made for a sailor, and I regret, every day of my life, that it has not been my vocation."

"At any rate, you have been a great deal on the sea, have you not?" asked Miss Campbell.

"As much as I could," replied Oliver Sinclair. "I have been up the Mediterranean from the Straits of Gibraltar to the ports of the Levant, across the Atlantic to North

America, and on the northern seas of Europe, and I know all the waters round England and Scotland—"

"And how magnificent they are, Mr. Sinclair!"

"Yes, indeed, I know of nothing to compare with these shores! We have here another archipelago; perhaps the sky is not so intensely blue as in the east, but the rugged rocks and hazy horizons make it much more romantic. The Grecian Archipelago gave birth to a whole company of gods and goddesses. That may be! but you may have remarked that they were very matter-of-fact divinities, very practical, and, moreover, endowed with corporeal life, doing business and reckoning up their accounts like any ordinary mortal. In my idea, Olympus appears like a great reception-room for rather common-place divinities. This is not the case with our Hebrides; they are the abode of supernatural beings! The ethereal Scandinavian deities are not in the least corporeal, but invisible beings, such as Odin, Ossian, Fingal, and the host of poetical phantoms, from the pages of the Sagas. How enchanting are these imaginary forms, which our memories can invoke, in the midst of Arctic gloom, or across the snows of northern regions! Here is an Olympus far more divine than its Grecian namesake; there is nothing earthly about it, and if one had to search the wide world for a place worthy of such guests, it would be found in our Hebrides.

Yes, Miss Campbell, this is where I should come to worship our divinities, and, like a true son of Caledonia, I would not change our archipelago with its two hundred isles, its grey skies, its tumultuous seas, influenced by the Gulf-stream, for all the archipelagos in the east."

"And it is all our own, being true Highlanders!" said Miss Campbell, carried away by her companion's enthusiastic words. "Ah! Mr. Sinclair, I am like you, passionately fond of our archipelago! it is magnificent, especially when lashed by the fury of tempests."

"It is indeed sublime," replied Oliver Sinclair. "There is nothing on the way to obstruct the violence of the gales which vent their force here after travelling three thousand miles! The American coast faces Scotland, and though great storms may rise there, it is the western coast of Europe which gets the first benefit of their fury! But what can they do against our Hebrides, which are not like that man of whom Livingstone speaks, who had no fear of lions, but was afraid of the sea? These isles, with their solid granite bases, can laugh to scorn the violence of wind and sea."

"The sea! A chemical combination of hydrogen and oxygen with two and a half per cent. of chloride of sodium! Indeed, nothing can be more sublime than the violent agitations of chloride of sodium!"



"The sea! a chemical combination."

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Miss Campbell and Oliver turned round on hearing these words, which were evidently meant for them, and intended as a reply to their enthusiastic eulogies.

Aristobulus Ursiclos was standing close behind them. The troublesome fellow could not resist the desire to leave Oban at the same time as Miss Campbell, knowing that Oliver Sinclair was accompanying her to Iona. Having come on board before them, he had remained in the saloon till just as they were within sight of the island.

The workings of chloride of sodium indeed! what a blow to their romantic visions!

CHAPTER XIV.

LIFE AT IONA.

MEANWHILE Iona—its ancient name being Isle of the Waves—rearing its cathedral hill about four hundred feet above the level of the sea, gradually grew more distinct as the steamer rapidly approached it.

About midday, the *Pioneer* came alongside a little jetty, made of roughly hewn rock, green with the constant wash of water. The passengers disembarked, some to return to Oban an hour later by the Straits of Mull, others—our friends being of that number—with the intention of remaining on the island.

Iona has no harbour properly speaking; a stone quay protects one of its creeks against the open sea, and that is all. Here, in fine weather, a few pleasure-boats, or fishing-smacks, lie at anchor.

Leaving the tourists to the mercy of a programme which obliged them to see the island in an hour, Miss

Campbell and her companions went in search of suitable lodgings.

It was not to be expected, that they would find any of the comforts of an ordinary seaside place at Iona; in fact the island is not more than three miles long, and one mile broad, and can scarcely count five hundred inhabitants. The Duke of Argyll, to whom it belongs, only draws from it a revenue of a few hundred pounds. There is no town, hamlet, nor even village here; nothing but a few scattered houses, for the most part mere ruins, picturesque if you like, but very primitive, almost all windowless, lighted only by the doorways, with a hole in the roof for a chimney, the walls made of mud and pebbles, and a few huts of reeds and briars bound together with great withies of seaweed.

Who would believe that Iona was the cradle of the religion of the Druids, from the earliest ages of Scandinavian history? Who would have imagined that it was here St. Columba—the patron saint of Ireland, whose name it also bears—in the sixth century founded the first monastery in all Scotland for the preaching of Christianity, and that here the monks of Cluny lived up to the time of the Reformation! Where will one now find the great buildings which were, in a way, the seminaries of the bishops and great abbots of the United Kingdom? Where, amidst all the *débris*, shall

one look for the library, rich in archives of the past, in manuscripts of Roman history, and in which the learned of the day came to study? No; at the present time, there is nothing but ruins, here where the civilization which so greatly changed all the northern states of Europe had its birth. Of the St. Columba of olden times, there now remains nothing but the island of Iona, with a few ignorant peasants, who can, with difficulty, get a crop of barley, wheat, and potatoes off its sandy soil, and a few fishermen who live on the fish-abounding waters of the Hebrides!

"Miss Campbell," said Aristobulus, in a contemptuous tone, "on first impressions, do you think this comes up to Oban?"

"It is much better," replied Miss Campbell, although no doubt she thought that there would be one inhabitant too many on the island.

Meanwhile, in lack of better accommodation, the brothers had discovered a very passable kind of inn, where tourists generally stayed who were not content with the short time the steamer allowed them for visiting the Druidical and Christian ruins. They were thus able to take up their abode at the Duncan Arms the same day, whilst Oliver Sinclair and Aristobulus Ursiclos, found lodgings in different fishermen's huts.

But such was Miss Campbell's frame of mind that she

was as comfortable in her room, with its window looking towards the west, as on the terrace of the high tower at Helensburgh, certainly more so than in the drawing-room of the Caledonian Hotel. From here the horizon lay before her eyes, without a single islet to break its circular line, and, with a little stretch of imagination, she might have been able to see, three thousand miles distant, the American coast on the other side of the Atlantic. Truly the sun had here a fine expanse in which to set in all its splendour.

The every-day living was simply and easily arranged; the meals were partaken of together in the one long room, Dame Bess and Partridge sitting at the same table according to the old custom.

Perhaps Aristobulus showed some surprise at this, but Oliver Sinclair had nothing to say against it; he had taken a great liking to these two servants, who warmly returned the feeling.

Here our friends led the old Scotch life in all its simplicity. After walks on the island, after conversation on bygone times, in which Aristobulus Ursiclos always chimed in most inopportunely with his modern remarks, they all met at the midday dinner and eight o'clock supper. Then as for the sunset, Miss Campbell never failed to watch it were the weather fine or cloudy! Who could tell? There might be some rift in the clouds, a

cleft or tiny gap through which the last ray could be seen.

And what meals they had! The most Scotch of Walter Scott's guests at a dinner at Fergus Mac-Ivor's or a supper at the Antiquary Oldbuck's, would have found nothing to complain of in the dishes served according to the old-fashioned customs. Dame Bess and Partridge, carried a century back, felt as happy as if they had lived in the time of their ancestors. The brothers were evidently pleased to see culinary preparations such as they could remember of old in the Melville family.

And this is something like the conversation during meal-time, in the long room, transformed into a dining-room.

"Take a few of these oatmeal cakes, they are very different from the sweet things they sell at Glasgow!"

"Do have some sowens; the mountaineers of the Highlands still eat this old-fashioned dish!"

"Some more 'haggis,' which our great poet Burns worthily celebrated in his verses, as the first, best, and most national of Scotch dishes."

"A little of this 'cockyleeky.' If the cock is a little tough, the leeks it is dressed with are excellent."

"And another helping of this hotch-potch, which beats any soup we get at Helensburgh!"



Ah! They fed well at the Duncan Arms, stocked with provision every two days by steamers going round the Hebrides! and they drank well also!

It was a sight worth seeing to look at the brothers talking together over their huge mugs, which held at least two quarts, and in which foamed the "usquebaugh," the national beverage, *par excellence*, or "hummok," better still, which was brewed especially for them! And the whisky made from barley which seemed to go on fermenting after it had been drunk! And if there was no strong beer, were they not content with the simple "mum" distilled from wheat, were it but the "twopenny" which can always be improved by a little gin! With such drinks they scarcely missed their port and sherry.

And if Aristobulus Ursiclos, accustomed to his modern comforts, was never tired of complaining, no one troubled to listen to him.

If he found the time pass very slowly on the island, it went quickly enough for the others, and Miss Campbell made no more protest against the mists which clouded the horizon every evening.

Certainly Iona was not a very large place, but does any one, who is fond of walking, want such extensive grounds? Cannot the whole of a royal park be contained in the end of a garden? They took long walks,

and here and there Oliver Sinclair made sketches, Miss Campbell would watch him painting, and thus the time went on.

The 26th, 27th, 28th, and 29th, of August, followed each other without one moment of *ennui*. This wild life was in keeping with the wild island, against whose great desolate rocks the sea broke with a continuous roar.

Miss Campbell delighted to have got away from the inquisitive, noisy world one meets at sea-side towns, walked out as she would have done in the park at Helensburgh, with her "rokelay" wrapped around her like a mantilla, and her hair tied up with the ribbon or "snood" so becoming to young Scotch girls. Oliver Sinclair was never tired of admiring her grace, her charming person, and fascinating ways. They often wandered along together, talking, looking around, and searching among the sea-wrack left by the last tide, till they had reached the farther end of the island. Whole flocks of divers would fly up before them, scared by their approach, herons in search of small fish thrown up by the tide, and solan geese, with their white-tipped wings and yellow heads, which especially represent the class of palmipeds found in the Hebrides.

Then, as evening came on, after the sunset which was invariably veiled in mist, nothing pleased Miss Campbell and her friends, more than to wander down to the

solitary shore, and spend the evening there! The stars shone out, and with them came memories of the poems of Ossian. In the stillness of the twilight, Miss Campbell and Oliver Sinclair heard the brothers reciting alternate lines from their favourite poet, the unfortunate son of Fingal.

"Star of descending night! fair is thy light in the west! thou liftest thy unshorn head from thy cloud: thy steps are stately on thy hill. What dost thou behold in the plain?

The stormy winds are laid. The murmur of the torrent comes from afar. Roaring waves climb the distant rock. The flies of evening are on their feeble wings; the hum of their course is on the field.

What dost thou behold, fair light? But thou dost smile and depart. The waves come with joy around thee; they bathe thy lovely hair. Farewell, thou silent beam! Let the light of Ossian's soul arise!"

Then silence followed, and they all went back to the little room at the inn.

Meanwhile, however short-sighted the brothers might be, they could well see that Oliver Sinclair gained exactly as Aristobulus lost in Miss Campbell's estimation. The two young men avoided each other as much as possible, the uncles did their utmost, and not without some difficulty preserved harmony among the little family.

Yes, they would have been glad to see Ursiclos and

Sinclair seeking, instead of avoiding each other's society, and maintaining as they did a contemptuous silence in each other's presence.

Did they think that all men regarded each other as brothers, and as such brothers as they themselves were?

At last they managed so cleverly that on the 30th of August, it was agreed that they should all go together to visit the ruins of the Cathedral and monastery, and the cemetery, situated to the north-east and south of the cathedral hill.

This excursion, which tourists make in less than two hours, had not yet been taken by the new-comers on the island. It was a sad want of deference towards the legendary shades of those hermit monks who dwelt in the huts along the coast, a want of respect towards the illustrious dead of the royal houses from Fergus II. to Macbeth.

CHAPTER XV.

THE RUINS OF IONA.

THAT same day, Miss Campbell, her uncles, and the two young men, set out on their excursion directly after breakfast. It was fine autumn weather, and every now and then bright sunbeams darted through rifts in the clouds. In these intermittent gleams of sunshine, the ruins crowning that part of the island, the rocks picturesquely grouped along the coast, the houses scattered upon the undulating slopes of Iona, and the sea rippling under a light breeze, seemed to lose their somewhat sombre aspect, and grew bright in the cheering light.

It was not a visitors' day; the steamer had brought over about fifty of them the day before, and would doubtless bring as many on the morrow, but at present Iona belonged entirely to its new inhabitants, and the ruins were quite deserted when our excursionists reached them.

They had a very lively walk. The brothers' good-humour seemed to infect the rest of the party, and they chatted away as they followed each other along the little shingly paths between the low walls of bare rock.

All went on pleasantly till they reached MacLean's Calvary. This fine red, granite monument, fourteen feet high, which overlooks the high road to Main Street, is the only one left of the three hundred and sixty crosses with which the island was covered at the time of the Reformation, about the middle of the sixteenth century.

Oliver Sinclair was anxious to make a sketch of this monument, which is a fine work, and stands out well in the midst of a bare, desolate plain.

Miss Campbell and her uncles stood round the young artist, about fifty feet from the Calvary, where they could get a full view of it, and Oliver Sinclair, sitting on a corner of a low wall, began to draw the outline of the ground on which the cross stood.

They had only been there a few moments, when it seemed to them all that a human form was trying to climb the steps of the Calvary.

"Well!" exclaimed Sinclair, "what can that intruder want there? If he were but dressed like a monk, he would not be in the way, and I could depict him prostrate at the foot of the old cross!"



Which he was vigorously attacking with his hammer.

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"It is only some inquisitive body who is just in your way, Mr. Sinclair," replied Miss Campbell.

"Stay, is it not Mr. Ursiclos, who has got ahead of us?" said Sam.

"'Tis he, to be sure!" added Sib.

It was indeed Aristobulus, mounted on the base of the monument, which he was vigorously attacking with his hammer.

Incensed at the mineralogist's want of respect, Miss Campbell immediately ran towards him.

"What are you doing there, sir?" she asked.

"You can see, Miss Campbell," replied Aristobulus; "I am trying to chip off a piece of the granite."

"But what is the use of such folly? I thought that the time of iconoclasts had long since passed."

"I am by no means an iconoclast," replied Aristobulus, "but a geologist, and as such I am anxious to know the nature of this stone."

A violent blow with the hammer finished the work of defacement, and a piece of the stone basement rolled on the ground.

Aristobulus picked it up, and increasing the power of his spectacles by a large magnifying-glass, which he drew from its case, he put it close to the end of his nose.

"It is just as I expected," said he. "This is a red granite of a very close, hard grain, which must have been

brought from the Island of Nuns, and is, in every respect, similar to that used by the architects of the cathedral in the twelfth century."

And Aristobulus could not resist this capital opportunity of launching into an archæological discourse, to which the brothers, who had now come up, thought it their duty to listen.

Without further ceremony, Miss Campbell went back to Oliver Sinclair, and when the sketch was finished, they all met again in the enclosure of the cathedral.

This edifice is a complex structure, composed of two churches joined together, the walls of which, thick as curtains, and the pillars solid as rock, have braved the rought tests of this northern climate for thirteen hundred years.

For some minutes the visitors walked about in the first church, which, from the shape of its vaults and arches, is of Roman architecture; then they went into the second, which is purely Gothic of the twelfth century, and forms the nave and transepts of the first. They wandered through these ruins from one epoch to another, peering down at the great square flags, through the cracks of which the grass had forced its way. Here and there were tombstones and effigies standing in corners, with their sculptured figures, seeming to ask alms of the passer-by.

The gloomy silence of the whole place seemed redolent with the romance of the past.

Miss Campbell, her uncles, and Oliver Sinclair, not noticing that their too learned companion had remained behind, then went under the dark archway of the square tower, an archway which formerly stood at the entrance of the first church, and, later on, at the point of intersection of the two edifices.

A few minutes later, measured footsteps were heard on the sonorous pavement; one might have imagined that one of the stone statues, animated by the breath of some spirit, was pacing slowly to and fro, like the Commander in Don Juan's drawing-room.

It was Aristobulus, who, with measured strides, was reckoning the dimensions of the cathedral.

"A hundred and sixty feet from east to west," he was saying, making a note of this in his pocket-book, as he entered the second church.

"Ah! it is you, Mr. Ursiclos," said Miss Campbell, sarcastically; "after the mineralogist comes the geometrician."

"And only seventy feet across the transepts," continued Aristobulus.

"And how many inches?" asked Oliver Sinclair.

Aristobulus looked at Oliver as though he did not know whether he ought to feel insulted or not,

but the uncles came to the rescue, and carried off Miss Campbell and the two young men to see the monastery.

There is nothing left of this building but insignificant ruins, although it survived its defacement at the time of the Reformation. After that time it was even used by a community of canonesses of the order of St. Augustine, who were allowed to take refuge there by the state. There are now nothing but the dreary ruins of a convent, devastated by tempests, with neither an arch nor a pillar standing to resist the inclemency of the climate.

After exploring the ruins of the monastery, formerly so flourishing, the visitors were able to admire the chapel, which was in a much better state of preservation, and the dimensions of which Aristobulus hardly thought necessary to take. In this chapel, which is less ancient, or more solidly built, than the refectories or cloisters of the convent, only the roof is wanting; the chancel, which is almost intact, is a piece of architecture much admired by antiquaries.

In the western transept is the tomb of the last abbess of the community; on its black marble slab is a woman's face, sculptured between two angels, and above it a Madonna holding the child Jesus in her arms.

"This is just like the Virgin at Père la Chaise and the Madonna of St. Sextus, the only Virgins of Raphael's



The Cathedral of Iona.

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who have not their eyelids lowered; this one looks right at you, and the eyes seem to smile!"

This remark was very appropriately made by Miss Campbell, but it brought an ironical sneer on Aristobulus' lips.

"Where have you ever learnt, Miss Campbell, that eyes can smile?"

Perhaps Miss Campbell would have liked to have answered him, that, at any rate, her eyes would never have that expression when looking at him, but she contented herself by saying nothing.

"It is a very common error," continued Aristobulus, as though he were speaking *ex cathedra*, "to talk of the eyes smiling. These organs of sight are, in fact, devoid of all expression, as oculists teach us: for example, place a mask on a face, look at the eyes through this mask, and I defy you to know whether the face is sad, smiling, or angry."

"Ah! indeed?" exclaimed Sam, who seemed to be interested in this little lecture.

"I was not aware of that," added Sib.

"Nevertheless it is a fact," continued Aristobulus, "and if I had a mask—"

But the wonderful young man did not happen to have a mask, so the experiment could not be made to prove his assertion.

Moreover, Miss Campbell and Oliver Sinclair had already left the cloister, and were going towards the cemetery.

This place bears the name of the "Shrine of Oban," in memory of the companion of St. Columba, who erected the chapel, the ruins of which stand in the midst of this field of the dead.

This is a curious piece of ground, covered with tombstones, where lie forty-eight Scotch kings, eight viceroys of the Hebrides, four viceroys of Ireland, and a king of France, whose name is entirely lost, like that of some chieftain of prehistoric times. Surrounded with its long iron railing, and paved with flags, it might be a kind of burying-ground of Karnac, whose stones are tombs, and not druidical rocks. Between them, on the grassy sward, lay the granite effigy of Duncan, King of Scotland, rendered illustrious by the tragedy of Macbeth. Of these stones some are simply ornamented with geometrical designs, others, sculptured in bas-relief, represent some fierce Celtic kings, lying there with the rigidity of corpses.

What memories hover over this necropolis of Iona! What scope for the imagination to wander into the past, in this St. Denis of the Hebrides!

And how can one forget those lines of Ossian, which seem to have been inspired on this very spot?



Miss Campbell and her companions were able to gaze in silence.
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"Son of the distant land! Thou dwellest in the field of fame! O, let thy song arise, at times, in praise of those who fell. Let their thin ghosts rejoice around thee."

Miss Campbell and her companions were able to gaze in silence, without being bored by a guide positively asserting very uncertain historical facts, for the benefit of tourists. They seemed to see again those descendants of the Lord of the Isles, Angus Og, the companion of Robert Bruce, and brother-at-arms of that hero, who fought for the independence of his country.

"I should like to come back here at night-fall," said Miss Campbell, "it seems to me that would be the best time to recall these memories; I should see them bringing up the corpse of the unfortunate Duncan; I should hear the conversation of the men as they laid him in the ground, consecrated to his ancestors. Now really, Mr. Sinclair, don't you think it would be the most propitious time to invoke the goblins who guard the royal cemetery?"

"Yes, Miss Campbell, and I don't think they could refuse to appear if you called them."

"How now, Miss Campbell, do you believe in hobgoblins?" exclaimed Aristobulus.

"Yes, sir, I believe in them, like the true Scotch woman I am," replied Miss Campbell.

"But, of course, you well know that they are quite imaginary, that nothing of the kind exists!"

"And suppose I do believe in them!" replied Miss Campbell. "I like to believe in domestic brownies who do the house-work; in sorcerers who perform their spells by certain incantations; in the Valkyrias, those fatal virgins of Scandinavian mythology, who carry off the fallen warriors from the battle-field; in those household fairies sung of by our poet Burns in his immortal verses, which no true Highlander can ever forget:—

"'Upon that night, when fairies light
On Cassilis Downans dance,
Or owre the lays, in splendid blaze,
On sprightly coursers prance.
Or for Colean the route is ta'en,
Beneath the moon's pale beams;
There up the cove to strave and rove
Amang the rocks and streams
To sport that night.'"

"Ah! Miss Campbell," continued the perverse fellow, "do you think that poets have any faith in those dreams of their imagination?"

"Most certainly, sir!" replied Oliver Sinclair, "or else their poetry would sound as unreal as any work which is not based on profound conviction."

"And you as well, sir?" said Aristobulus, "I knew you were an artist, but I did not think you were a poet."

"It is all the same thing," said Miss Campbell; "art embraces many forms."

"But no—no!—it is not possible! . . . You cannot believe in all the mythology of the ancient bards, whose disordered brains invoked imaginary divinities!"

"Oh! Mr. Ursiclos!" exclaimed Sam, touched in a tender point, "please do not treat our ancestors, who have sung of old Scotland, with such disrespect."

"And just listen to them for a moment!" said Sam, quoting from his favourite poem.

"Pleasant are the words of song, lovely the tales of other times! They are like the calm dew of the morning on the hill. . . ."

"When the sun is faint on its side, and the lake is settled and blue in the vale."

added his brother.

The brothers would no doubt have indulged indefinitely in the poems of Ossian, had not Aristobulus abruptly cut them short, saying,—

"Gentlemen, have you ever seen a single one of these sprites, of whom you talk so enthusiastically? No. And are they to be seen? No, again."

"That is just where you are mistaken, sir, and I pity you for never having seen one," said Miss Campbell, who would not yield a hair of her hobgoblin to her opponent. "They can be seen in any of the Scotch highlands, gliding through lonely glens, rising out of the depths of ravines, fluttering over the surface of lakes, sporting in peaceful waters, and enjoying themselves in

the midst of winter storms. And stop; why should not this Green Ray, which I persist in following, be the scarf of some Valkyria with its fringe trailing in the water on the horizon?"

"Oh! dear no!" exclaimed Aristobulus. "Not at all! And I will tell you what your Green Ray really is."

"Please don't tell me, sir," cried Miss Campbell. "I do not wish to know."

"But I must," persisted Aristobulus, quite excited by this discussion.

"I forbid you—"

"I must tell you all the same, Miss Campbell. If this last ray from the sun, just as it dips below the horizon is green, it is most likely because, just as it passes the thin line of water, it becomes impregnated with the colour—"

"That's enough, Mr. Ursiclos—!"

"Unless this green is the natural result of the crimson of the sun's disk, which suddenly disappears, but leaves the impression on the retina of the eye, for in optics green is the complemental colour of crimson."

"Ah! sir, your physical arguments—"

"My arguments, Miss Campbell, agree with the nature of things," replied Aristobulus, "and, indeed, I am thinking of publishing some notes on this subject."

"Let us go, uncles," said Miss Campbell, thoroughly annoyed. "Mr. Ursiclos will spoil my Green Ray with his explanation!"

"Sir," interposed Oliver Sinclair, "your notes on the Green Ray could not fail to be most curious, but allow me to propose another subject to you, perhaps more interesting still."

"And what may that be?" asked Aristobulus, in a pompous tone.

"You must doubtless know, that savants have treated scientifically this important question, *the influence of fishes' tails on the undulation of the sea!*"

"I beg your pardon, sir!"

"Well, sir, here is another, which I especially commend to your learned meditation, and that is: *The influence of wind instruments on the formation of tempests!*"

CHAPTER XVI.

TWO GUN-SHOTS.

FOR the next two or three days they saw nothing of Aristobulus. Had he left Iona by the steamer after seeing that it was only loss of time to run after Miss Campbell? No one could say; at any rate it was just as well that he kept out of the way, for the young girl was no longer indifferent to him, she absolutely hated him. To have stripped her ray of its poetry, to have materialized her dream, to have changed the scarf of a Valkyria into a horrid, optical phenomenon! Perhaps she might have forgiven him anything but this.

The brothers were not even allowed to go and make inquiries as to what had become of Ursiclos.

Besides, what good would that have been? What could they have said to him, and what could they still hope for? Could they henceforth ever expect a union between these two beings, so entirely opposed to each

other, and separated by the gulf which there is between vulgar prose and sublime poetry, the one with his mania for reducing everything to scientific formulas, the other living only in the ideal, which ignores causes and is content with impressions.

Meanwhile, Partridge, at Dame Bess's instigation, had learnt that the "young old savant," as he called him, had not yet effected his departure, and that he was still staying at the fisherman's hut, where he took his meals in solitude.

At any rate, Aristobulus did not trouble them with his company. The truth is that when he did not confine himself to his room, intent, no doubt, on some lofty scientific speculation, he went off, with his gun over his shoulder, to the farther shores of the coast, and there gave vent to his ill-humour by a great slaughter of black mergansers, or sea-gulls. Did he still retain some hope then? Did he flatter himself that when once Miss Campbell's whim had been gratified, she would return to her senses? Possibly he did, considering the vanity of the man.

But one day a very awkward accident happened to him, which might, indeed, have proved fatal, had it not been for the generous and timely assistance of his rival.

It occurred on the afternoon of the 2nd of September, when Aristobulus had gone to inspect the rocks at the

southern point of the island. One of these granitic masses especially attracted his attention, so much so, that he determined to climb to the summit, which, however, was a most imprudent undertaking as the rock was smooth and slippery, and there was scarcely an inch of foot-hold.

But Aristobulus was not to be daunted; he began to climb the steep side, helping himself up by clinging to tufts of vegetation growing here and there, and with great difficulty he managed to reach the top.

When once there, he gave himself up to his favourite pursuit of mineralogy, but when he wanted to descend, it was quite another matter. After having looked carefully for the easiest side to let himself slide down, he was about to commence the descent, when his foot slipped, and he went over the side without being able to stop himself. He would certainly have been pitched into the surf below, had not his fall been broken by a projecting shrub.

Aristobulus now found himself in a ludicrous, not to say dangerous position; he could not get up again, and at the same time it was impossible for him to descend.

An hour passed thus, and no one knows what would have happened, had not Oliver Sinclair, with his artist's knapsack on his shoulder, been passing that way at the time, and heard his cries. At sight of Aristobulus sus-



Sinclair heard his cries.

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pended thirty feet in the air, and swinging to and fro like a sign-board in front of a tavern, he could hardly help laughing, but, as one may be sure, he did not hesitate a moment in going to his assistance.

This was not done without great difficulty; Oliver was obliged to get to the top of the rock, to hoist the hanging man up again, and then help him to descend on the other side.

"Mr. Sinclair," said Aristobulus, as soon as he felt himself in safety. "I miscalculated the angle of inclination of this side of the rock; hence it was I slipped and was suspended."

"Mr. Ursiclos," replied Oliver, "I am most happy that chance allowed me to be of service to you!"

"Let me thank you nevertheless."

"Do not mention it, sir; you would have certainly done as much for me."

"Undoubtedly."

Oliver Sinclair did not think of mentioning this incident, which was of no consequence to him. As to Aristobulus, he never spoke of it again, but as he highly valued his important person, he took it kindly of his rival, for having helped him out of this awkward predicament.

And now as to the famous ray; it must be admitted that it was singularly loath to show itself, and yet there

was no time to be lost, for autumn would soon shroud the sky with her veil of mists, there would be no more soft, clear evenings, which, in these northern latitudes, are few and far between. No more such distinctly defined horizons as might have been traced by a geometrician's compass, or an artist's pencil. Would they be obliged to give up the phenomenon, which they had gone from place to place to see? Must they put off the observation till the following year, or obstinately persist in following it under other skies?

In truth, this was as much a cause of annoyance to Oliver Sinclair as Miss Campbell; they were both incensed at seeing the horizon daily obscured in sea mists. Such was the case during the first four days of this foggy month of September.

Every evening Miss Campbell, her uncles, and Oliver Sinclair sat on some rock, with the waves softly lapping beneath them, and conscientiously watched the sun set in brilliant banks of clouds, far more beautiful, no doubt, than if the sky had been perfectly clear.

An artist would have gone into raptures at the splendour and majesty of the spectacle, unfolded every evening, at the dazzling mass of colours shading off from one cloud to another, from deep violet at the zenith, to vivid crimson at the horizon, at the glittering cascade of molten gold, showered on the aerial rocks, but in this

case the rocks were clouds, and these clouds, drifting across the sun's disk, absorbed its last rays, and completely hid them from the eyes of the anxious observers. Then they would all turn away disappointed like the spectators of a fairy scene at a theatre, the last effect of which has been spoilt by a blunder of the scene-shifter, and, taking the longest route, they would return to the Duncan Arms.

"Wait till to-morrow," Miss Campbell would say.

"Yes, to-morrow," repeated the uncles, "we have a kind of presentiment that to-morrow—"

And each evening the brothers had a kind of presentiment which invariably ended in disappointment.

However, the 5th of September dawned fair and cloudless, the haze vanished away in the early sunbeams.

The barometer, which for some days had been rising, went up still higher, and remained at settled fine weather. It was not hot enough now for the sky to be misty as in the burning heat of summer; the atmosphere was as dry at the level of the sea, as on the top of a mountain, some thousand feet high.

To say with what anxiety the changes in this day were watched would be impossible, or with what beating hearts they observed the least cloud in the sky, or even with what feverish care they followed the sun on its daily course.

Fortunately, the breeze, which was light, but continuous, was off the land; in passing over the eastern mountains, and sweeping the surface of great prairies, it could not be charged with those molecules of moisture, thrown off by any large expanse of water.

But how long this day was in passing! Miss Campbell could not keep still in one place; braving the scorching sun, she paced feverishly to and fro, whilst Oliver Sinclair climbed the heights of the island in order to get a more extensive view of the horizon. The two uncles emptied a whole snuff-box and a half, and Partridge, as though he were on duty, stood in the attitude of a sentinel keeping watch on the sky.

It had been arranged that day that they should dine at five o'clock, in order to be in good time at the place of observation; the sun would not set till forty-nine minutes past six o'clock, so they would have plenty of time to watch its course down to the horizon.

"I believe we shall catch him this time!" said Sam, rubbing his hands.

"I think so too," replied Sib, going through the same performance.

However, about three o'clock, there was an alarm; a great fleecy cloud had risen in the east, and was being carried towards the sea by the breeze.

It was Helena who saw it first, and she could not repress an exclamation of disappointment.

"It is but one cloud, and we have nothing to fear," said one of her uncles; "it will soon dissolve."

"Or it may travel quicker than the sun," said Oliver Sinclair, "and disappear below the horizon before he does."

"But is not this cloud the forerunner of a bank of mist?" asked Miss Campbell.

"I must go and see."

And Oliver Sinclair immediately ran off to the monastery ruins, where he could get a better view of the eastern sky over the hills of Mull, the outlines of which were as clearly defined as a jagged black line traced on perfectly white paper.

There was not another shred of cloud in the sky, and not a particle of mist hovered round Ben More, which rose clear and distinct about three thousand feet above the level of the sea.

Oliver Sinclair returned half an hour later with reassuring words. This cloud was but a foundling lost in space; it would not even find enough to feed upon in this dry atmosphere, and so must perish of inanition on its way.

Meanwhile the fleecy cloud was making towards the zenith, and to the vexation of all, followed the sun's course, and was wafted nearer and nearer to it by the breeze. In sailing through the sky, its shape had been changed by an aerial current; from the form of a dog's

head, which it had at first, it had taken that of a fish in the shape of a gigantic skate; then it turned into a ball, dark in the centre, but brilliant round the edges, and so reached the sun's disk.

A cry escaped Miss Campbell, who was standing eagerly watching its course.

The radiant orb, hidden behind this screen of mist, cast not a single ray over Iona, and the island lay in deep shadow.

But soon the shadow passed away, and the sun re-appeared in all its glory; the cloud went on down to the horizon, but did not reach it, and half an hour later, it had vanished as though through a hole in the sky.

"At last it has gone," exclaimed the young girl, "and I only hope it may not be followed by another!"

"No, reassure yourself, Miss Campbell," replied Oliver; "as this cloud disappeared so quickly, and in such a manner, it is a proof that it met with no other vapours in the atmosphere, so that the whole sky, from east to west, must be perfectly clear."

At six o'clock, the observers took up their position in the most open place they could find.

It was at the southern end of the island, on the highest point of the cathedral hill. From this position, all the highest part of Mull lying to the east could

be seen. To the north the island of Staffa looked like an enormous calabash, stranded in the waters of the Hebrides, and, beyond, Ulva and Gometra stood out from the long coast-line of Mull; towards the west lay the immense plain of the sea.

The sun was sinking rapidly; the line of the horizon might have been traced with Indian ink. All the windows in Iona were ablaze, as though they had caught the reflection of golden flames of fire.

Miss Campbell and her friends stood silent and awe-struck before the sublime spectacle, and watched with half-closed eye-lids the sun's disk, which seemed to change and swell, till it looked like an immense crimson fire-balloon on the surface of the water. There was not a sign of mist visible.

"I think we shall catch him this time," repeated Sam.

"I think so too," said Sib.

"Silence, uncles!" exclaimed Helena.

And they were silent and held their breath, as though they were afraid it might condense, and form a light vapour to obscure the sun.

The lower edge of the sun's disk had touched the horizon, and grew larger and larger as though it were being filled out with some luminous fluid. They all seemed to drink in its last rays, like Tel Arago in the deserts of Palma on the coast of Spain, watching the

signal-shot, from the island of Ivica, which would allow him to close the last triangle of his meridian line!

At last a tiny edge of the sun's upper rim was all that remained; in less than fifteen seconds the last ray would be shot into space, and would give the eyes so anxiously awaiting it that impression of heavenly green—

Suddenly two gun-shots echoed among the rocks below the hill; a thick line of smoke followed, and then a whole cloud of sea-birds flew out, sea-gulls, wagels, and petrels, startled by the untimely reports.

The cloud of birds flew straight up, then forming a screen between the horizon and the island, it passed just in front of the sinking orb, at the very moment when its last line of light shot upwards from the surface of the water.

At that same moment, they saw the inevitable Aristobulus, gun in hand, standing on a point of the cliff, watching the flight of birds.

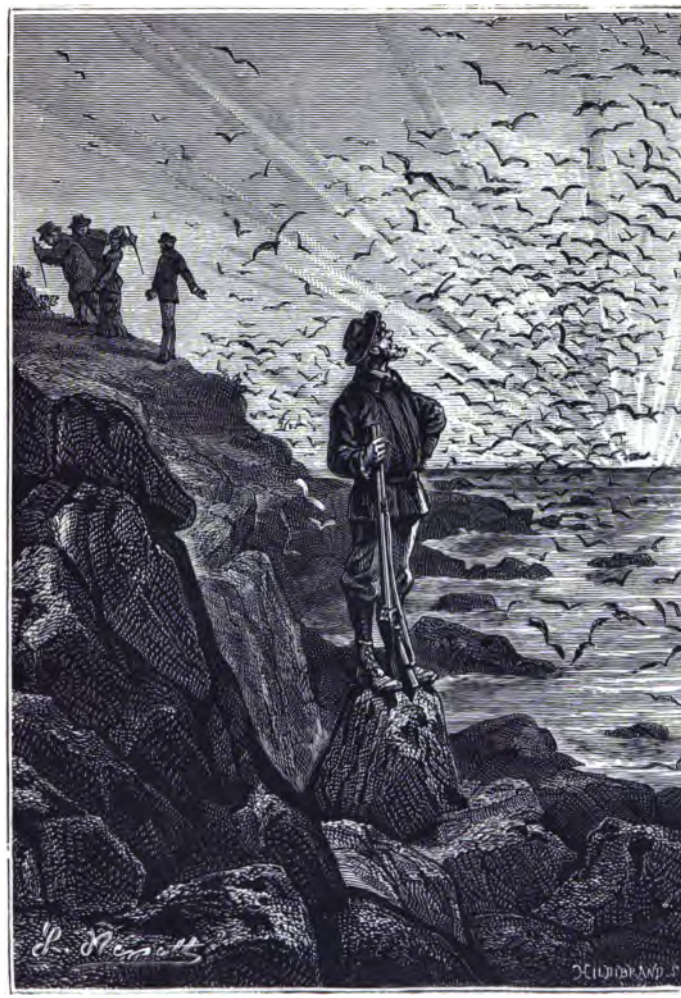
"We have had quite enough of this!" exclaimed Sib.

"A great deal too much," cried Sam.

"I should have done well to have left him hanging from the rock," said Oliver to himself; "at any rate he would have been there still."

Helena with compressed lips and fixed gaze said not a word.

Once again she had missed seeing the Green Ray, and all through Aristobulus Ursiclos.



Gun in hand, watching the flight of birds.

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CHAPTER XVII.

ON BOARD THE "CLORINDA."

THE next day, at six o'clock in the morning, the *Clorinda*, a charming yawl of from forty-five to fifty tons burden, left the little harbour of Iona, and, under a light north-easterly breeze, tacking to starboard, gained the open sea.

The *Clorinda* carried on board Miss Campbell, her uncles, Oliver Sinclair, Dame Bess and Partridge; it is hardly necessary to say that the unlucky Aristobulus was not with them.

This arrangement had been made, and immediately put in execution, after the adventure of the previous evening.

On leaving the cathedral hill to return to the inn, Miss Campbell had said very abruptly,—

"Uncles, since Mr. Ursiclos intends to remain at Iona we will let him have the island to himself. Once at

Oban and again here, it has been entirely his fault that we have not been able to make our observation ; we will not stay a day longer where this tiresome man can annoy us with his clumsy pranks!"

To this proposal so frankly made, the brothers had nothing to object ; besides, they also shared the general discontent, and anathematized Aristobulus Ursiclos. Decidedly the situation of the suitor of their choice was for ever compromised. Nothing could bring him again into Miss Campbell's good graces, so, from now and henceforth, they were obliged to relinquish a plan which could never be realized.

"After all," as Sam observed aside to his brother, "promises imprudently made are not iron manacles!"

Which, in other words, means that one can never be bound by a rash oath, and Sib had given his complete approbation to this Scotch axiom.

Just as they were saying "good night" in the long room of the Duncan Arms, Miss Campbell said,—

"We shall start to-morrow ; I will not stay here a day longer!"

"That is understood, my dear Helena," said her uncle Sam ; "but where shall we go?"

"Any place where we shall be certain of not meeting that Mr. Ursiclos! So no one must know that we are going to leave Iona nor where we are going."

"Just so, my dear child," replied Sib; "but how shall we get away, and where shall we go?"

"What!" exclaimed Miss Campbell, "is there no means of leaving this island at dawn? Is there not one inhabited or even uninhabited place along the Scotch coast, where we might make our observation in peace?"

Her uncles certainly could not have answered these two questions, asked in a tone which admitted of no misunderstanding or prevarication.

Fortunately Oliver Sinclair was at hand.

"Miss Campbell," said he, "this is how everything can be arranged: there is an island or rather an islet near here which will be quite suitable for the observation, and at the same time we shall not risk being interfered with by any one."

"Which is it?"

"It is Staffa, which you can see two miles to the north of this island."

"Is there any place to lodge at, and any possibility of getting there?" asked Miss Campbell.

"Yes," replied Oliver, "and very easily. I have seen a yacht lying in the harbour, which can be hired at any time, to go to the English Channel, the North Sea, or the Irish Channel. What is there to prevent us from chartering this yacht, and stocking it with provisions for

a fortnight, since Staffa can offer nothing in that way, and starting to-morrow at break of day?"

"Mr. Sinclair," replied Miss Campbell, "if we can secretly leave this island to-morrow, you may be sure I shall owe you a great debt of gratitude!"

"To-morrow before midday, provided we get a good breeze in the morning, we shall be at Staffa," replied Oliver, "and except for visitors who stop for scarcely an hour twice a week, we shall have the island to ourselves."

As usual the brothers at once summoned Dame Bess, who immediately appeared.

"We are going to leave here to-morrow!" said Sam.

"To-morrow at daybreak!" added Sib.

And thereupon, without further parley, Dame Bess and Partridge at once set to work to make their preparations for departure.

Meanwhile Oliver had gone down to the harbour, and was there making arrangements with John Olduck.

John Olduck was the skipper of the *Clorinda*, a true seaman, with his gold-laced cap and brass buttons on his blue suit. Directly the terms were arranged, he with his six men, at once set to work to get everything in sailing order; his crew were composed of some of those picked men who, by trade, are fishermen in the winter,



At six o'clock in the morning.

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and take service on board yachts in the summer; they make the best sailors in the world.

At six o'clock in the morning the new passengers went on board the *Clorinda*.

They had carried off all the provisions they could get, including fresh and preserved meat; besides the steward would always be able to take in a fresh stock from the steamers which run regularly between Oban and Staffa.

Thus, at daybreak, Miss Campbell had taken possession of a charming little boudoir at the stern of the yacht; her uncles had the comfortable berth in the "main cabin" beyond the saloon. Oliver Sinclair had a cabin near the companion-steps leading to the saloon, and Dame Bess and Partridge disposed of themselves, the one on the left, the other on the right of the captain's cabin. Towards the bows was the kitchen, and beyond that again the crew's quarters, provided with six hammocks. Nothing was wanting in this charming yawl, built by Ratsey of Cowes; with a fair sea and stiff breeze, she would have taken an honourable place in "The Royal Thames Yacht Club Regatta."

Every one was delighted when the *Clorinda* at last left her moorings, and got under sail. She dipped gracefully to the breeze, without her white deck of Canadian pine being soiled by a particle of spray from the waves through which her slender bows were cutting.

The distance between Iona and Staffa is very short; with a favourable wind it can easily be done in twenty-five minutes by a yacht making her eight miles an hour. But just now the wind was dead ahead, though but a light breeze; besides this the tide was going down, so that they were obliged to tack several times before they could reach Staffa.

This mattered very little to Miss Campbell; the *Clorinda* had started, and that was the main thing.

An hour later Iona was lost to view in the morning haze, and with it the detested image of that *bête-noir*, whose very name Helena would have liked to forget, as she frankly confessed to her uncles.

"Have I not some reason for it, Uncle Sam?"

"Every reason, my dear Helena."

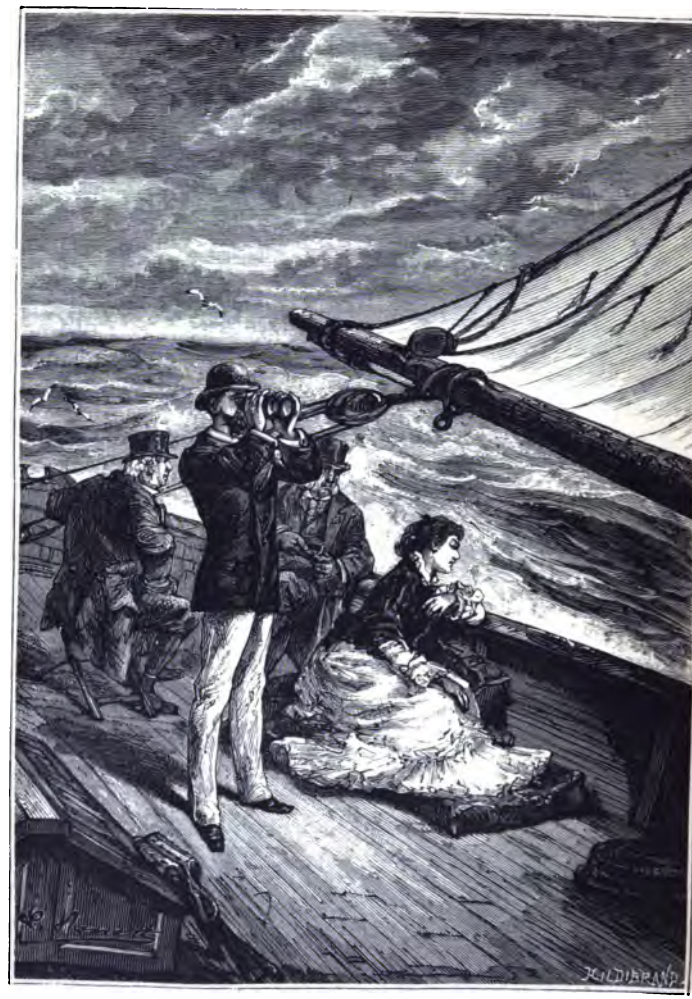
"And does Uncle Sib also approve?"

"Entirely."

"Then," added she, kissing them both, "you must confess it was a very foolish idea of yours to think of marrying me to such a man!"

And they both agreed that it was.

Altogether this was a charming trip, its only fault being that it was too short. And yet what was there to hinder them from prolonging it, and why not let the yawl carry them over the open Atlantic in search of the Green Ray? But no; it had been agreed that they



Miss Campbell was reclining.

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should go to Staffa, and the skipper had made his arrangements to reach that celebrated isle directly the tide was favourable.

About eight o'clock, an early breakfast, composed of tea and sandwiches, was served in the saloon. The guests, in high good-humour, took their places at the table, without one regret for the good things of the Duncan Arms. Ungrateful creatures!

When Miss Campbell again came on deck, the yacht had tacked and changed her bearings. She was now making towards the fine lighthouse, built upon the rock of Skerryvore, which rises a hundred and fifty feet above the level of the sea. The breeze, having freshened, the *Clorinda*, with her great white sails spread, was struggling against the ebb-tide, but made very little progress towards Staffa.

Miss Campbell was reclining in the stern upon one of the thick canvas cushions used on board pleasure-boats. She thoroughly enjoyed the rapid motion of the yacht, so different from the jolting of a railway journey; it was like the speed of a skater, carried along on the surface of a frozen lake. Nothing could have been more graceful than the *Clorinda* as she lightly dipped her head in the sparkling waves, sometimes seeming to float in the air like an immense bird upheld by its powerful wings.

This sea, covered to the north and south by the Hebrides, and sheltered by the coast on the east, is like an inland basin or lake.

The yacht made an oblique run for Staffa, a great, solitary rock lying off Mull, only a hundred feet above the level of the sea. One might almost imagine that it moved, showing sometimes its basaltic cliffs to the west, and sometimes the rugged pile of rocks on its eastern coast. By an optical illusion it seemed to turn upon its base, at the caprice of the angles under which the *Clorinda* approached or turned from it.

Meanwhile, owing to the tide and wind, the yacht made little progress; when she veered towards the west, beyond the extreme point of Mull, she met with a heavy sea against which she gallantly held her own, then, tacking, she found herself gently rocked in quiet waters.

Towards eleven o'clock the *Clorinda* had gone far enough north to enable her to run straight for Staffa; sail was taken in, and the captain made ready for mooring.

There is no harbour at Staffa, but it is easily approached under any wind on its eastern side, among the rocks capriciously scattered by some convulsion of a geological period. At the same time, in very bad weather, the place is not approachable by craft above a certain tonnage.

The *Clorinda* was able to go alongside these black basaltic rocks. She veered round skilfully, leaving on one side the rock of Bouchaillie with its prismatic sides left bare by the low tide, and on the other, that causeway running along the coast to the left. This is the best anchorage in the island, and the place where the boats which bring tourists to the island call for them again, after their excursion over the hills of Staffa.

The *Clorinda* penetrated a little creek almost to the entrance of Clam-shell Cave, where her sails were taken in and the anchor dropped.

A moment later, Miss Campbell and her companions disembarked, and ascended the steps cut in the rock to the left of the grotto. A wooden staircase with a hand-rail led up the cliff, and this they took to reach the upper plateau.

At last they were at Staffa, and as much out of the civilized world as if a storm had cast them on a desert island in the Pacific.

CHAPTER XVIII.

STAFFA.

ALTHOUGH Staffa is but a mere islet, nature has, at least, made it one of the most curious of the Hebrides. This great oval rock, one mile long and half a mile wide, is furrowed with magnificent caves of basaltic origin, and is the rendezvous of geologists as well as of tourists. However, neither Miss Campbell nor her uncles had yet been to Staffa, and Oliver Sinclair alone knew its marvels. He was well fitted, therefore, to do the honours of the island, where they had come to spend a few days.

This rock is entirely the result of the crystallization of an enormous basaltic mass, which became congealed here at a very early period of the world's formation. In fact, according to the observations of Helmholtz—formed on the experiments of Bischof on the congealing of basalt, which can only be melted at a temperature of two thousand degrees—it must have taken no less than three hundred and fifty millions of years, to complete its entire congealment. It must, therefore, have been at a



Staffa.

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fabulously remote epoch that the solidification of the world, after passing from a gaseous to a liquid state, began to be produced.

Had Aristobulus Ursiclos been there, he would have had matter for some fine dissertation on the phenomena of geological history. But he was far away; Miss Campbell thought no more of him, and as her Uncle Sam remarked to his brother, "Let sleeping dogs lie!"

"First of all," said Oliver Sinclair, "we must take possession of our new domain."

"Without forgetting the motive which brought us here," added Miss Campbell, smiling.

"Without forgetting it! I should think not indeed!" exclaimed Sinclair. "Let us go at once and look for a good place of observation, and see what kind of western horizon our island gives us."

"Yes, let us go," replied Miss Campbell, "but it is rather misty to-day, and I do not think that the sunset is likely to be favourable for us."

"We will wait, Miss Campbell, we will wait, if needs be, until the end of autumn."

"Yes, we will wait," repeated the brothers, "until Helena orders us away."

"There is no hurry, uncles," replied the young girl, who had been in high spirits since they had left Iona; "there is no hurry; the situation of this island is charm-

ing. A villa built in the middle of that beautiful green slope would not be at all a bad place to live in, even when the storms, which America sends us so liberally, break over Staffa."

"Hum!" exclaimed Uncle Sib, "They must be terrible on this extreme verge of the ocean!"

"They are indeed," replied Sinclair. "Staffa is exposed to every wind that blows, and affords no shelter except on its eastern coast, where our *Clorinda* is now lying at anchor; and on this part of the Atlantic the bad weather lasts nearly nine months out of the twelve."

"That is why we cannot see a single tree," said Sam; "all vegetation on this plateau must perish directly it rises a few feet above the ground."

"Well, and is it not quite worth while to be able to live for two or three months on this island?" exclaimed Miss Campbell. "You must buy Staffa, uncles, if it is to be sold."

And, as though they could refuse their niece nothing, the brothers had already put their hands into their pockets, as if about to settle the bargain.

"To whom does Staffa belong?" asked Sib.

"To the McDonalds," replied Sinclair. "It only brings them in twelve pounds a year, but I do not think they would give it up at any price."

"That is a pity!" said Miss Campbell, who

naturally very enthusiastic, as we know, was still more so under her present circumstances.

Thus talking, the new arrivals made their inspection of the island, walking over its verdant slopes. It was not a day for visitors to come by steamer from Oban, so Miss Campbell and her friends had no fear of being disturbed by tourists; they had the desert island to themselves. A few highland ponies and black cows were grazing on the meagre pasture-land of the plateau, through which thin streaks of lava could be seen; but no shepherd was anywhere visible, and if they were tended, it was from afar—perhaps from Iona, or even Mull, fifteen miles off.

Neither was there a house to be seen; only the ruins of a hut destroyed by the terrific storms which rage from September to March. In truth, twelve pounds is a handsome revenue for a few acres of meadow-land, the grass of which is as bare as a piece of velvet worn to the thread. The exploration of the island was soon made, and they had now only to scan the horizon.

It was very evident that there was nothing to be expected from the sunset; that evening the sky, which had been so clear the day before, was now shrouded in mist, as might be expected in the changeable autumn weather. About six o'clock a bank of cloud tinged with red, hovering over the western horizon, foretold another

change; the brothers were even obliged to confess that the barometer on board the *Clorinda* was going down to changeable, with a tendency to sink lower still. After the sun had sunk behind a waving line of billows, they all returned to the yacht, and passed the night quietly in the little cove by Clam-shell Cave.

The following day, the 7th of September, they agreed to make a closer inspection of the island. After having explored the heights, they must go and see the caves, and make up for lost time, since, all through Aristobulus, they had been so long detained in their search for the phenomenon. Besides this, there was no cause to regret their excursions to the caves, which have justly made this island so celebrated.

This day was given up to the exploration of the Clam-shell Cave, in front of which the yacht lay at anchor. Oliver Sinclair had given the steward instructions to have luncheon served here, where the guests might imagine themselves shut up in a ship's hold. Indeed, the prisms, from forty to fifty feet long, which form the sides of the vault, look very much like the timbers inside a vessel.

This cave, about thirty feet high, fifteen wide, and a hundred feet deep, is very easily approached; opening almost directly east, it is protected from the violence of breakers which, in heavy gales, dash over the other



Clam-shell Cave.

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caverns in the island, but at the same time it is the least interesting. Nevertheless, the arrangement of its basaltic curves, which look rather like a work of art than nature, is very wonderful.

Miss Campbell was very much charmed with her visit; Oliver Sinclair made her admire the beauties of Clam-shell, with doubtless less scientific pomposity than Aristobulus would have done, but certainly with more artistic feeling.

"I should like to take away some souvenir of our visit to Clam-shell," said Miss Campbell.

"Nothing can be easier," replied Oliver; and in a few moments he had made a sketch of the cave, taken from the rock which projects at the end of the great basaltic causeway. The mouth of the cave, which had the appearance of an enormous mammiferous creature, reduced to a skeleton, the wooden staircase leading to the top of the island, the clear, peaceful water at its entrance, beneath which the enormous basaltic substructure could be seen, were all skilfully portrayed on a leaf of a sketch-book, under which the artist wrote,—

"*From Oliver Sinclair to Miss Campbell.*

"Staffa, 7th of September, 1881."

After luncheon, the skipper had the largest of his shore-boats made ready, then his passengers took their seats in it, and were rowed alongside the picturesque

coast, till they came to Boat Cave, so called because it is entirely filled by the sea, and cannot be entered on dry ground.

This cave is situated on the south-west side of the island, and when the sea is rough, it is dangerous to enter it; but to-day, although the sky was threatening, the wind had not yet freshened, and its exploration was perfectly safe.

Just as their boat reached the mouth of the cave, the steamer laden with tourists from Oban cast anchor in sight of the island. Fortunately, her passengers would not stay more than two hours, and during that time would not interfere at all with Miss Campbell and her friends. They could remain unperceived in the cave, during the regular routine of the excursion, which consisted of a visit to the cave of Fingal and a walk on the slopes of the island, so that there was no occasion for them to come in contact with the noisy excursionists, for which they were not sorry, and with a very good reason. For, after the sudden departure of his companions, might not Aristobulus, in order to return to Oban, have taken this steamer which had just called at Iona? At any rate, it was an encounter to be avoided.

Whether or not the above-mentioned gentleman was among the tourists, it was certain that no one remained behind after the steamer had left. When Miss Campbell



They could remain unperceived.

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and her companions at last came out of this long kind of tunnel which seems to have been burrowed in a basaltic mine, they found the island as peaceful as ever.

There are several celebrated caverns in many parts of the globe, but more particularly in volcanic regions, which are distinguished by being either of Neptunian or Plutonian origin.

Some of these cavities have been hollowed out by the water which gradually bites into and wears away even granitic rocks until it has transformed them into immense excavations ; such are the caves of Crozen in Brittany, those of Bonifacio in Corsica, of Morghatten in Norway, of St. Michael in Gibraltar, of Scratchell on the coast of the Isle of Wight, and of Tourane in the marble cliffs on the coast of Cochin China.

Others, of quite different formation, are caused by the giving way in the sides of the granite or basalt, produced by the congealing of igneous rock, and the appearance of which is far more weird and rugged than that of caves of Neptunian creation.

In the first case, Nature, true to her principles, has economized force; in the second, she has economized time. The celebrated cave of Fingal belongs to the class of excavations of a geological epoch, and it was to the exploration of this marvellous cavern that the following day was to be devoted.

CHAPTER XIX.

FINGAL'S CAVE.

HAD the skipper of the *Clorinda* been in any port of the United Kingdom within the last twenty-four hours, he would have been made acquainted with a meteorological bulletin, not very reassuring to vessels about to cross the Atlantic.

In fact, a heavy gale had been announced by telegram from New York. After having crossed the ocean from west to north-east, it threatened to break with terrific force over the coasts of Ireland and Scotland, before it spent itself on the shores of Norway.

But in default of this intelligence, the yacht's barometer indicated great atmospheric disturbances, of which a prudent seaman could not but take note.

On the morning of the 8th of September, John Olduck, feeling somewhat uneasy, went to the farthest extremity of the western side of the island, in order to gauge the state of sky and sea.

Clouds, or rather streaks of mist, were already chasing each other swiftly across the sky; the breeze was freshening, and before long would blow a gale. The sea was flecked with foam in the distance, and the waves were breaking with a roar over the basaltic rocks which bristle round the foot of the island.

John Olduck did not feel at all reassured by his observations. Although the *Clorinda* was comparatively sheltered in Clam-shell Cove, it was hardly safe anchorage even for a boat of her small dimensions. The rising tide becoming engulfed between the islets and the eastern causeway might produce a formidable surf, which would make the position of the yacht rather perilous. Something must therefore be done, and that before the channel became impracticable.

When he returned on board, he found his passengers there, and acquainted them with his fears and the necessity of their leaving the island at once. By delaying a few hours, they would run the risk of meeting a heavy sea in the straits between Staffa and Mull. Now his proposal was that they should take shelter behind that island, in the little harbour of Auchnacraig, where the *Clorinda* would have nothing to fear from the gale.

"Leave Staffa!" cried Miss Campbell, "and lose such a magnificent horizon!"

"I believe it will be very dangerous to remain in our present anchorage," replied the skipper.

"If it is really necessary, my dear Helena!" said her Uncle Sam.

"Yes, if it is really necessary!" repeated his brother.

Seeing what disappointment this hurried departure would cause Miss Campbell, Sinclair hastened to say,—

"How long do you think this storm will last, captain?"

"Two or three days at most, at this time of the year," replied the skipper.

"And do you think it absolutely necessary for us to leave?"

"Necessary and urgent."

"What are your plans?"

"To get under sail this very morning, and with this breeze we may be at Auchnacraig before evening, and we can return to Staffa as soon as the weather clears."

"Why not return to Iona, which we could reach in an hour?" asked Sam.

"No,—no, not to Iona!" exclaimed Miss Campbell, before whom rose the spectre of Aristobulus.

"We should not be much safer in the harbour at Iona than here," observed the skipper.

"Very well," said Oliver Sinclair, "you can go, captain, you can go at once to Auchnacraig, and leave us here at Staffa."

"At Staffa!" exclaimed John Olduck, "where there is not even a house to shelter you!"

"Will not Clam-shell Cave do for a few days?" continued Sinclair. "What is there wanting there? Nothing. We have plenty of provisions on board, bedding and change of clothes, which can be brought on land, and, moreover, a very good cook who will be only too pleased to stay with us!"

"Yes! Yes!" cried Miss Campbell, clapping her hands, "you can go, captain, you can take your yacht to Auchnacraig, and leave us on Staffa. We shall be like people cast on a desert isle, and we will make believe to be shipwrecked; we shall watch for the return of the *Clorinda* with all the emotions, transports, and anguish of the Swiss Family Robinson, when they saw a vessel passing their island! What brought us here? A romantic idea, was it not, Mr. Sinclair? and what could be more romantic than this place, uncles? And, besides, I should regret it all my life, if I missed the sublime spectacle of a storm, on this poetical island, with the northern sea lashed into fury, and the elements raging all around us! Do go, captain, and we will stay here till you return."

"But—" timidly ejaculated the brothers almost simultaneously.

"I believe you made some remark, uncles," interrupted

Miss Campbell, "but I think I know the way to bring you round to my opinion," and thereupon she gave them each a kiss.

"There is one for you, Uncle Sam, and one for you, Uncle Sib. I wager now that you have nothing more to say against my plan."

After this they did not dream of making the slightest objection. So long as it pleased their niece to remain at Staffa, why not remain there, and how was it they had not thought at once of this simple and natural plan which would settle all difficulties?

But it was Oliver Sinclair's idea, and Miss Campbell thanked him most cordially for it.

Matters being thus arranged, the sailors brought on shore everything necessary for their stay on the island. Clam-shell Cave was quickly transformed into a temporary dwelling, under the name of Melville House.

They would be as comfortable here, and even more so, than at the inn at Iona. The steward undertook to find a suitable place for his culinary operations, at the entrance of the cave, in a recess, evidently intended for this purpose.

Then Miss Campbell and her companions left the *Clorinda* in one of the small boats belonging to the yacht, which John Olduck placed at their disposal, as

it might be useful to them in going from one rock to another.

An hour later, the *Clorinda*, with reefed sails, and storm-jib set, made for the north of Mull, in order to reach Auchnacraig, by the straits between that island and the mainland. Her passengers watched her out of sight from the heights of Staffa, and half an hour later she had disappeared behind the isle of Gometra, bending to the breeze like a sea-gull skimming the surface of the waves with its wings.

But although the weather was threatening, the sky was not altogether overcast, and the sun shone through great rifts in the swiftly flying clouds. They might walk over the island, and, on returning, skirt the shore at the foot of the basaltic cliffs. So they proposed at once to visit Fingal's Cave, under the escort of Oliver Sinclair.

Tourists coming from Iona in the Oban steamer usually visit this cave in boats, but it is possible to penetrate to its farthest end by landing on the rocks to the right, where there is a practicable quay.

This was the way that Oliver Sinclair resolved to make the exploration, without using the boat.

Leaving Clam-shell Cave, they took the causeway running along the eastern shore of the island which is formed by sunken rocks, and is as dry and solid a pave-

ment as though constructed by an engineer. This walk, which took but a few minutes, was made as they chatted and admired the islets, gently washed by the surf, and the bases of which could be seen through the clear, green water. One cannot imagine a more beautiful pathway to this cave, which is worthy to have been the palace of some hero of the "Thousand and One Nights."

Arriving at the south-east angle of the island, Oliver Sinclair made his companions climb some natural steps in the rock, which would have lost nothing by comparison with the staircase of a mansion.

At the corner of the landing-place rise the exterior columns, grouped against the sides of the cave, like those of the small temple of Vesta at Rome, but in juxtaposition, so as to hide the main building.

Supported on these columns is the enormous mass of rock which forms this corner of the island. The oblique cleavage of these rocks, which seem to be arranged according to the geometrical design of stones in an arch, contrasts strangely with the vertical order of the columns which support them.

The sea, already influenced by the approaching storm, rose and fell against the foot of the steps, and through its clear, trembling depths could be seen the dark masses of rock basement.

Having reached the upper landing-stage, Oliver Sinclair turned to the left, and showed Miss Campbell a kind of narrow quay, or rather a natural foot-path, which led along the side of the rock, right into the depths of the cave. An iron hand-rail, imbedded in the rock, ran between the wall and the abrupt edge of the quay.

"Ah!" said Miss Campbell, "I think this hand-rail rather detracts from the romance of 'Fingal's palace.'"

"Yes," replied Oliver, "it is an intervention of man in the work of nature."

"If it is useful, we may as well make use of it," said Sam.

"And I intend to do so," added his brother.

Just as they were about to enter the cave, the visitors halted by their guide's advice.

Before them opened a spacious, lofty cave, filled with a dim, mysterious light. The space between the two sides of the cave, at the level of the sea measures about thirty-four feet; to the right and left the basaltic columns, wedged one against the other, like those in certain cathedrals of the latest Gothic period, hide the main supporting walls. From the top of these columns spring the sides of an enormous pointed arch, which, at its key-stone, rises fifty feet above the average water mark.

Miss Campbell and her companions were obliged at last to tear themselves away from the contemplation of this wondrous spectacle, and follow the ledge of rock which formed the pathway leading into the cave.

There, ranged in perfect order, were hundreds of prismatic columns of unequal height, as if produced by some gigantic process of crystallization, their cleanly-cut sides standing out as sharply as though they had been chiselled by a sculptor. The exterior angles of the one adapted themselves geometrically to the interior angles of the other; some had three sides, some four, and even up to seven or eight, which gave a variety to the general uniformity of the style, and proves the artistic order of nature.

The light, coming from without, played upon these diamond-shaped angles, and, falling upon the water inside the cave, which reflected like a mirror, impregnated the submarine stones and sea-weeds with every tint of green, red, yellow, and orange, and then shone upon the basaltic rocks, which formed the ceiling of this incomparable cavern, till they sparkled with effulgent brilliancy.

Within reigned a sonorous silence—if we may be allowed to couple these words—that silence peculiar to profound caverns which the visitors did not dream of breaking. Melancholy strains of harmony

alone filled the cavern, and gradually died away as the wind rose and fell.

One could almost imagine one heard these prisms resounding in the strong gusts of wind, like the keys of an enormous harmonica. And is it not to this curious effect that it owes its name of An-Na-Vine, "the harmonious grotto," as this cavern is called in the Celtic language?

"And what name could suit it better?" said Oliver Sinclair, "since Fingal was the father of Ossian, whose genius united poetry and music."

"Undoubtedly," interposed Sam, "for as Ossian has said,

"'When now shall I hear the bard? when rejoice at the fame of my fathers? The harp is not strung on Morven. The voice of music ascends not on Cona!'"

"Yes," added his brother Sib;

"'Dead, with the mighty, is the bard! Fame is in the desert no more.'"

The extreme depth of the cavern is estimated at about one hundred and fifty feet. At the end of the cave appears a kind of organ case, composed of a certain number of columns, smaller than those at the entrance, but equally perfect in their moulding, before which our visitors again stopped for a moment.

From this point the prospect looking out on to the open sky was wonderfully beautiful. Through the water, impregnated with light, could be seen the submarine base of the cavern formed of the shafts of columns, fitting one into the other like the squares of a mosiac. On the sides of the rocks was a wonderful play of light and shade, which was quite lost when a cloud passed across the entrance of the cave, like a gauze curtain hung before the stage of a theatre. All again grew bright and resplendent, with every prismatic colour, when a gleam of sunshine, reflected from the crystal depths, shot up in lines of light to the very summit of the cavern.

Outside, the sea was breaking over the projecting strata of the gigantic arch, which stood out against this background of sea and sky like a frame-work of ebony, and beyond, the horizon appeared in all its splendour, with Iona lying two miles off in the distance, the ruins of its cathedral clearly defined in the white sunlight.

All stood in ecstasy before this fairy-like scene, quite unable to express their intense admiration.

"What an enchanted palace!" exclaimed Miss Campbell at last, "and what a prosaic mind must he have who would refuse to believe that it was created for sylphs and mermaids! For whom do the strings of this great Æolian harp vibrate? Is it not that supernatural music which Waverley heard in his dreams?"



Outside, the horizon appeared in all its splendour.

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"You are right, Miss Campbell," replied Oliver Sinclair, "and, undoubtedly, when Walter Scott was seeking his imagery in the poetical past of the Highlands, he thought of the palace of Fingal."

"I should like to invoke the spirit of Ossian here," continued the enthusiastic young girl. "Why should not the invisible bard reappear at my call, after slumbering for fifteen centuries? I like to think that when he was chanting the glorious deeds of his time, the blind poet took refuge more than once in this cave, which still bears his father's name! No doubt the echoes have often repeated his epic and lyric inspirations in the purest Gaelic accent. Do you not think, Mr. Sinclair, that the aged Ossian might have sat in this very place, and that the music of his harp may have mingled with the harsh accents of the voice of Selma?"

"How can one disbelieve what you seem to be so thoroughly convinced of, Miss Campbell?" replied Oliver.

"Shall I call him?" asked Helena softly.

And once or twice her clear, fresh voice rose above the soughing of the wind in the cavern, repeating the name of the ancient bard.

But, however much Helena might have wished it, and though she called three times, no shade of Ossian appeared in the paternal palace.

Meanwhile, the sun had become veiled in a thick mist, the cave was gradually filling with dark shadows, outside the sea had risen considerably, and great waves were already breaking with a roar against the foot of the rocks.

The visitors retook their way along the narrow path, already wet with the spray from the waves, and as they turned a sharp corner of the island, they met the full force of the wind, but were soon on the sheltered causeway. The weather had changed considerably for the worse during the last two hours; a stiff gale was blowing off the sea, and threatened soon to turn to a hurricane.

However, Miss Campbell and her companions were able to reach Clam-shell Cave easily, under shelter of the basaltic cliffs.

The following day the barometer had fallen very low. The wind raged furiously, and heavy, leaden-coloured clouds lowered in the sky; there was no rain as yet, but not a gleam of sunshine was to be seen for a moment.

Miss Campbell did not seem so vexed at this change in the weather as might have been expected; this life on a desert island, with the prospect of a tempest, delighted her enthusiastic nature. Like one of Walter Scott's heroines, she loved to wander, absorbed in

thought, among the rocks of Staffa; more often than not she went alone, and they left her undisturbed in her solitude.

Several times she returned to Fingal's Cave, attracted by the strange romance of the place. There she spent whole hours lost in day-dreams, paying little heed to the cautions they gave her not to venture there imprudently.

The following day, the 9th of September, the tempest broke with unparalleled fury along the Scotch coast; it was a terrific hurricane, and nothing could have withstood its force on the plateau of Staffa.

About six o'clock in the evening, when dinner was awaiting them in Clam-shell Cave, the brothers and Oliver Sinclair began to feel extremely anxious. Helena had been out since three o'clock, without saying where she was going, and had not yet returned.

They waited patiently, but with increasing anxiety, till seven o'clock, and still there was no sign of Helena. Several times Oliver Sinclair had gone up on to the plateau of the island. No one was to be seen. The storm was then raging with terrific fury, and the breakers dashed madly over the south-west side of the island.

"Alas! unhappy girl!" suddenly cried Oliver; "if she is in Fingal's Cave, we must find her at once, or she is lost!"

CHAPTER XX.

FOR HELENA'S SAKE.

A FEW moments later, Oliver Sinclair, having rapidly crossed the causeway, reached the entrance of the cave, near the steps cut in the rock.

The brothers and Partridge followed him closely, but Dame Bess remained in Clam-shell Cave, waiting with inexpressible anxiety, and getting everything ready to receive Helena on her return.

The sea had already risen high enough to cover the ledge of rock forming the foot-path; it was dashing over the hand-rail, and made it quite out of the question to enter the cave this way.

As it was impossible to enter by this path, it was equally impossible for any one to get out of the cavern, and if Miss Campbell were there, she must be quite a prisoner! But how could they ascertain this, and how could they reach her?

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"Helena! Helena!" Page 275.

"Helena! Helena!"

Could she possibly hear this name through the ceaseless crashing of breakers? A wild uproar of wind and waves filled the cavern, and it was of little use to look or call.

"Perhaps Helena is not there," said Sam, who would willingly have clung to this hope.

"But where else can she be then?" replied his brother.

"Yes! where else can she be?" cried Sinclair. "Have I not searched for her in vain, in every nook and corner of the island? Would she not have returned before this if she could have done so? She is there!—there!"

And then they remembered the rash wish, which the imprudent young girl had often expressed, to see a storm in Fingal's Cave. Had she then forgotten that the sea, in a storm, would rise higher and higher, till it made the cave a prison from which it would be impossible to escape?

What could they now do in order to rescue her?

The hurricane was venting its full force on this corner of the island, and sometimes the waves rose above the archway of the cave, where they broke with a deafening roar, and then fell back in sheets of foam, like the cataracts of Niagara, but the body of water rushed with overwhelming force, right into the cave, like a

torrent suddenly overleaping its barrier, so that the farther end of the cavern received its full force.

In what niche could Miss Campbell have found a refuge which would not have been assailed by such terrific breakers? The arch of the cave was directly exposed to their force, and in their rise and fall they must have swept the foot-path with irresistible fury.

But still they refused to believe that the rash young girl was there! How could she have withstood the force of such a sea? Would not her torn and mutilated body have been carried out by the retreating waters? Would not the currents have swept her past the rocky causeway, right up to Clam-shell Cave?

"Helena! Helena!"

This name was persistently shouted through the hubbub of wind and wave, but there was no answer.

"No! no! she cannot be in the cave!" replied the brothers in despair.

"She is there!" persisted Oliver Sinclair.

And he pointed to a piece of ribbon which a retreating wave had cast on the steps of the rock.

He rushed to seize it.

It was the snood which Miss Campbell wore on her hair. Was it possible to doubt now?

But then, if this ribbon had been torn from her, must not the same blow have crushed her against the rock?

"I will know!" cried Oliver Sinclair.

And taking advantage of a receding wave, which left the foot-way almost clear, he seized the hand-rail, but a heavy sea immediately dashed him on to the landing-place.

Had not Partridge, at the risk of his life, rushed forward and caught him, Sinclair would have rolled down the steps and been carried off by the sea without a chance of being rescued.

The young man struggled to his feet. His determination to enter the cave was not in the least shaken.

"Miss Campbell must be there!" he repeated; "and she is alive, since her body has not been swept past us, like this strip of ribbon! It is quite possible that she may have found refuge in some recess. But her strength will soon give way, and she cannot hold out until the tide goes down. We must manage to reach her somehow!"

"I will go," said Partridge.

"No; leave it to me," replied Sinclair.

He was about to attempt the last means of saving Helena, and yet it was one chance in a hundred whether it would succeed.

"Wait here for us, gentlemen," said he to the brothers, "and we will be back in five minutes. Come on, Partridge."

The two brothers stood in a corner, sheltered by the cliff, out of reach of the waves whilst Oliver Sinclair and Partridge hurried back to Clam-shell Cave.

It was then half-past eight. Five minutes later the young man and Partridge reappeared, dragging along the causeway the boat which the skipper had left them.

Could Oliver be thinking of attempting to enter the cave by sea, since it was impossible to do so by land?

Yes, he was about to make that venture; he was risking his life, and he knew it, but that did not make him hesitate for a moment.

The boat was brought to the foot of the staircase, where it was sheltered from the surf behind a projecting rock.

"I am going with you," said the old servant.

"No, Partridge," replied Oliver, "we must not laden this light boat uselessly, and if Miss Campbell is yet alive, I shall be able to manage by myself."

"Oliver," cried the brothers, with tears in their eyes; "Oliver, save our child!"

The young man pressed their hands, then, springing into the boat, he seized the oars and skilfully pushed out into the eddying sea; then, waiting an instant for the reflux of an enormous wave, he was carried right in front of the cave. Here the boat was nearly upset, but, with a dextrous movement of the oars, Oliver succeeded



He was carried forward on the huge mass of water. Page 282.

in keeping her straight. Had she been caught amidships, she would inevitably have been capsized.

At first the waves carried the frail boat almost above the entrance of the cavern, and one would have thought the nutshell would have been dashed to pieces against the rock, but the receding wave drew it swiftly back with irresistible force.

Three times the light craft was thus tossed to and fro, first precipitated towards the cave, then carried back again, without being able to effect a passage through the waters which barred the entrance, but Oliver retained his self-possession, and held his own with the oars.

At last the boat was balanced for a moment on the crest of an enormous breaker, which rose almost as high as the plateau of the island, then fell with tremendous rapidity right at the foot of the cave, and Sinclair was hurled down its liquid back as though he were shooting a rapid.

A cry of horror escaped the spectators of this scene, for it appeared that the boat must inevitably be dashed against the rocks to the left of the entrance.

But the intrepid young man, with a stroke of the oars, righted her. The mouth of the cavern was then free, and, with the rapidity of an arrow, he was carried forward on the huge mass of water and disappeared inside the cavern.

A second later, the liquid sheets broke in an avalanche of foam against the island.

Would the boat be dashed to pieces against the rocks at the end of the cavern, and would there be two victims now instead of one?

Such was not the case. Oliver Sinclair had been hurled swiftly past the uneven roof of the cavern, but, by lying flat in the boat, he had escaped being struck by the projections of rock. In the space of a second he had reached the further end of the cavern, his only fear being that he might be carried out again by the retreating waters, before he could seize hold of some ledge of rock.

The boat was dashed against the columns at the end of the cave, and was broken in two, but fortunately Sinclair had time to lay hold of a projecting rock, which he clutched with the tenacity of a drowning man, and by this means hoisted himself out of reach of the sea.

A moment later, the broken boat was carried out by the retreating wave, and at sight of the wreck, the brothers and Partridge could not but conclude that the gallant young man had perished.

CHAPTER XXI.

A TEMPEST IN A CAVERN.

OLIVER SINCLAIR was safe and sound, and, for the moment, out of danger. The darkness of the cavern was so great that he could see nothing of the interior. Only a dim twilight penetrated between the intervals of the waves, when the entrance was left partially clear.

Nevertheless, Sinclair endeavoured his utmost to see where Miss Campbell could have found a refuge. But in vain.

"Miss Campbell! Miss Campbell!" he shouted.

No words can depict his feelings when he heard a voice answering him,—

"Mr. Sinclair! Mr. Sinclair!"

Miss Campbell was alive!

But where could she be out of reach of the billows?

Crawling along the footpath, Sinclair went all round the end of the cavern.

crests of the waves were impregnated with light from outside, and, besides this, large sheets of phosphorus cast a kind of electric glare on the diamond-shaped prisms of the basaltic columns, and reflected a vague, livid light.

During those rapid gleams, Oliver Sinclair turned towards Miss Campbell, and looked at her with emotions not altogether evoked by the danger around them.

She was gazing in rapture at this sublime spectacle of a tempest in a cavern!

At that moment a wave, higher than the rest, dashed right up to the recess of Fingal's armchair, and Sinclair feared that they would both be swept from their place of refuge.

He held the young girl in his arms, as though she were a prey which the sea would have snatched from him.

"Oliver! Oliver!" cried Miss Campbell, losing her self-possession in a moment of terror.

"Don't be alarmed, Helena!" replied Sinclair. "I will protect you, Helena!—I—"

He said he would protect her! But how? How could he shelter her from the violence of the waves if their fury increased, if the water rose still higher, and made their present place of refuge untenable? What other place was there to afford a shelter from this terrific

crashing and leaping of water? All these contingencies passed before him in their terrible reality.

Self-possession was all-important, and Sinclair resolutely determined to maintain his composure.

And well he might, all the more so, as the young girl's physical, if not moral, strength must give way before long. Exhausted by the wearying struggles, reaction would soon set in. Sinclair already felt that she was growing gradually weaker. He endeavoured to reassure her, although he had himself given up all hope.

"Helena—my dear Helena!" he murmured, "on my return to Oban—I learnt—that it was, thanks to you—that I was saved from the Gulf of Coryvrechan!"

"Oliver—you knew it?" replied Miss Campbell, in a stifled voice.

"Yes—and I will show my gratitude to-day!—I will bring you safely out of Fingal's Cave."

How dare Sinclair speak of safety, when the sea was dashing right up to the niche? He could only partially shelter his companion from its fury, and once or twice was himself almost swept off—only resisting the force of the water with an almost superhuman effort, feeling Helena's arms tightly clasped round him, and knowing that she, too, must have been carried off with him.

It must have been about half-past nine in the evening when the tide was at its highest, and the billows were

surging into the cavern with the impetuosity of an avalanche; they broke with a deafening roar against the sides of the rock, and such was their fury, that every now and then pieces of the basalt became detached and fell, making dark circles in the phosphorescent sheets of foam. Would the columns themselves gradually crumble away before the indescribable fury of this onslaught? Might not even the roof of the vault fall in?

Sinclair could not quiet these harrowing thoughts; he felt an irresistible torpor creeping over him, which he tried in vain to shake off, and which was occasioned by the want of air, at times; for, although it came in abundantly with the waves, they seemed to draw it all out again as they swept back from the cavern. Helena's strength was exhausted, and she became unconscious.

"Oliver!—Oliver!" she murmured, as she swooned away in his arms.

Oliver was crouching with the young girl in the farthest corner of the recess; he felt her cold, inanimate form, and endeavoured to chafe her with the little strength left him. Already the water was up to his waist, and if he, too, lost consciousness, it would be all over with them both!

The gallant young man held out for several hours longer. He supported Miss Campbell in his arms, and



"Oliver! Oliver!" she murmured.

shielded her as best he could from the shock of the waves—and this in total darkness—for there was not even a gleam of phosphorescent light visible now, and in the midst of the continuous thundering and roaring of the tempest. It was no longer the voice of Selma which resounded in the palace of Fingal! It was the frightful barking of the dogs of Kamtschatka, which, says Michalet, "roam about in bands of thousands during the long nights, howling furiously at the roaring of the North Sea!"

At last the tide began to go down. Sinclair noticed that with the lowering of the water the waves grew less furious. The darkness in the cavern was so intense, that outside it seemed comparatively light, and in this obscurity the entrance to the cavern, no longer obstructed by the surging of the billows, could be dimly seen. Ere long the mists of night alone besieged the armchair of Fingal, the waves ceased to curl round them with treacherous fury. Hope once again revived in Sinclair's breast.

By calculating the time which had elapsed since high tide, he knew that it must be past midnight. Two hours more, and the footway would be clear of the foaming breakers, and would then be practicable. For this event he waited, peering eagerly through the darkness, and at last he was rewarded.

The moment to leave the cave had come.

Miss Campbell, meanwhile, had not recovered consciousness. Sinclair took her inanimate form in his arms; then carefully descending from their place of refuge, he groped along the narrow ledge of rock, the iron hand-rail of which had been twisted and torn away by the heavy seas.

As the waves now and again swept towards him, he stood still for a moment, or drew back a step.

At last, just as he had reached the entrance of the cavern, a great wave broke right over them—he thought that they must have been crushed against the rock, or hurled into the foaming abyss below.

By a supreme effort, he managed to retain his footing, and, taking advantage of the retreating wave, he rushed out of the cave.

In a moment he had reached the angle of the cliffs, where the brothers, Partridge, and Dame Bess, who had now joined them, had remained all the night.

They were saved!

But this paroxysm of moral and physical energy, to which Oliver Sinclair had worked himself up, suddenly abandoned him, and after giving Miss Campbell into Dame Bess's arms, he fell exhausted at the foot of the rocks. Had it not been for his courageous devotion, Helena would never have come out of Fingal's cave alive.



Sinclair took her in his arms.

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CHAPTER XXII.

THE GREEN RAY.

A FEW minutes later, under the influence of the fresh air in Clam-shell Cave, Miss Campbell recovered consciousness, and seemed to awake as if from a dream in which Oliver Sinclair had taken the prominent part. Of the dangers to which her imprudence had exposed her, she thought but little.

She could not speak yet, but, at sight of Oliver Sinclair, tears of gratitude filled her eyes, and she held out her hand to her rescuer.

Her uncles, too deeply moved to speak, warmly grasped the young man's hands. Dame Bess and Partridge would have liked to have hugged him.

Then, overcome by fatigue and after changing their saturated garments, they each sought the repose which all so much needed, and this eventful night ended peacefully.

But the impressions of the scene enacted in the legendary cave of Fingal could never be effaced from the memories of those who had been the chief actors in it.

The next day, while Miss Campbell was still lying upon her couch in Clam-shell Cave, her uncles were walking arm-in-arm along the neighbouring causeway. They did not speak; what need of words to express the thoughts uppermost in both minds? Of what could they be thinking, but that Oliver Sinclair had risked his life in order to save the imprudent young girl? And what must they own but that their first plans might now be realized? In this dumb-show of conversation, carried on by nods and gesticulations, many things were said of which the brothers foresaw the speedy fulfilment. To them Oliver was no longer merely Oliver, but no less than Amin, the most perfect hero of the Gaelic times.

For his part, Sinclair was a prey to very natural excitement. A feeling of delicacy made him wish to be alone; he felt embarrassed in the company of the brothers, as though his very presence might seem to exact the reward of his devotion.

So, after leaving Clam-shell Cave, he wandered off alone over the heights of Staffa.

His thoughts were all of Miss Campbell, and he was

quite oblivious of the dangers which he had incurred and voluntarily shared with her. All he cared to remember of this horrible night, were the hours spent by the side of Helena, in the dark cavern, when he held her in his arms to protect her from the raging of the waters. Again through the gleams of phosphorescent light he saw the beautiful face of the young girl, pale, rather with fatigue than fright, rising above the fury of the tempest, like the spirit of the storms! Again he heard her voice, trembling with emotion, as she replied, "What, you knew it?" when he had said, "I know what part you took when I was in danger of perishing in the Gulf of Coryvrechan!" Again he imagined himself in the scanty shelter afforded by the niche fit only to hold a stone statue, where two young, loving creatures had suffered and struggled for their very lives during many long hours. There it was no longer Oliver Sinclair and Miss Campbell; they had called each other Oliver and Helena, as though, when instant death threatened them, they would have entered upon a new life together!

These vivid thoughts crowded through the young man's brain as he wandered over the island. However much he would like to have returned to Miss Campbell, an irresistible feeling held him back, perhaps in her presence he would be unable to repress the words which

were burning on his lips, and he was determined to be silent.

As happens sometimes after a great storm, the weather was splendid; the sky, swept by the fury of the gale, appeared of a transparent and incomparable ultramarine, and not a shred of mist veiled the horizon, though the sun had passed the zenith.

Lost in a whirl of overwhelming thoughts, Sinclair strolled leisurely along, basking in the warm, refulgent light, and inhaling the life-giving sea-breeze, when suddenly a thought struck him—a thought, quite driven from his memory by those now haunting his brain, came back to him as he found himself before an expanse of clear horizon.

"The Green Ray!" he exclaimed, "if ever sky was likely to favour our observation we have it here! Not a cloud! not a sign of haze! and it is scarcely probable that there will be any after the terrific gales of yesterday, which must have swept them all away to the east. Miss Campbell little thinks what a glorious sunset is awaiting her this evening! I must—I must go and let her know—without a moment's delay!"

Delighted at having such a plausible excuse for returning to Helena, Sinclair started back to Clam-shell Cave.

A few minutes later he found himself before Miss

Campbell and her uncles, who were looking affectionately at her whilst Dame Bess held her hand.

"Miss Campbell," said he, "you are better, I am glad to see. Do you feel quite strong again?"

"Yes, Mr. Sinclair," replied Miss Campbell, starting at sight of the young man.

"I think it would do you good," resumed Sinclair, "to come and get a breath of fresh air on the heights. The sunshine is splendid after the storm, and it will put new life into you."

"Mr. Sinclair is right," said Sam.

"Quite right," added Sib.

"And then," continued Oliver Sinclair, "I must tell you that in less than a few hours, unless I am very much mistaken, your dearest wish will be gratified."

"My dearest wish?" murmured Helena, as though speaking to herself.

"Yes; the sky is remarkably clear, and it is very probable that the sun will set on a cloudless horizon."

"Can it be possible?" cried Sam.

"Can it be possible?" repeated his brother.

"And I have good reason to believe," added Sinclair, "that this very evening we shall be able to see the Green Ray."

"The Green Ray!" repeated Miss Campbell.

And she seemed to be puzzling her confused brain as to what this ray could be.

"Ah, to be sure!" added she, "we came here to see the Green Ray!"

"Come along! Come along!" said her uncle Sam, delighted at this opportunity of drawing the young girl out of the lethargy into which she had fallen. "Let us go to the other side of the island."

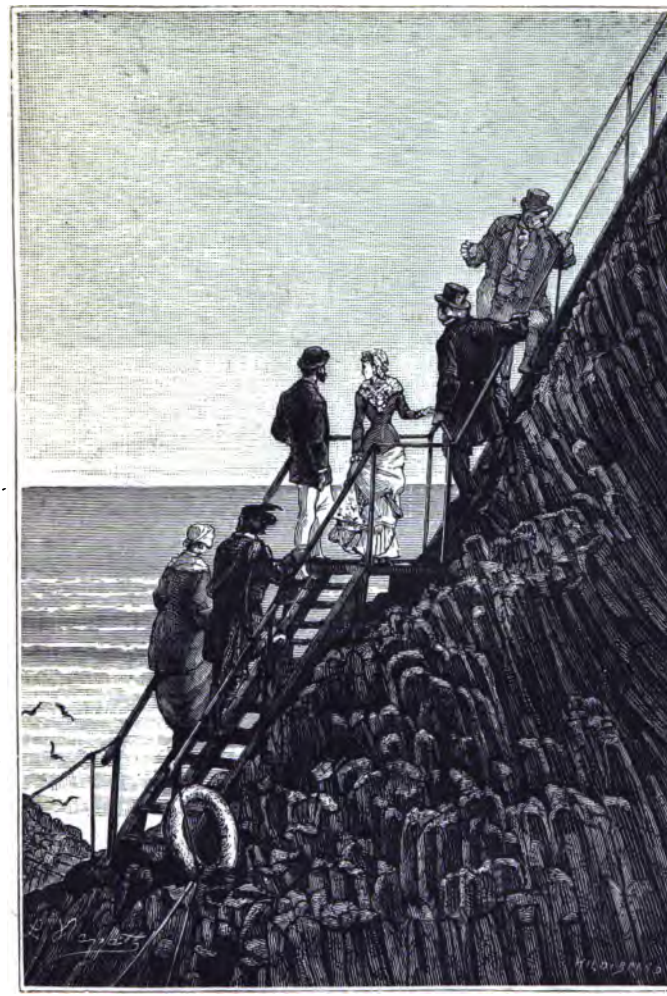
"And we shall have a better appetite for dinner on our return," gaily added Sib.

It was then five o'clock in the afternoon.

Led by Oliver Sinclair, the whole party, including Dame Bess and Partridge, at once left the cave, and mounting the flight of wooden steps which led up the face of the cliff, they reached the plateau of the island.

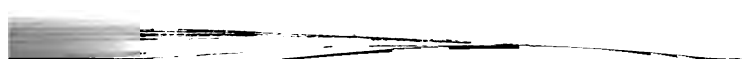
The brothers could not repress their delight at the magnificence of the sky, through which the sun was slowly travelling down to the west. Perhaps they exaggerated a little, but never, no never had they been so enthusiastic with regard to the phenomenon. It almost seemed that it was especially for their benefit, and not for that of their niece, that they had made so many changes and submitted to so much discomfort, since they had left Helensburgh.

In truth, the sunset that evening promised to be splendid, and the most prosaic of individuals must have



Mounting the flight of wooden steps.

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admired the glorious panorama of sea and sky stretching before his eyes.

Helena felt instilled with new life as she inhaled the fresh breezes; her beautiful, clear eyes sparkled with health as she gazed on the rippling waters of the Atlantic stretching far and wide, and her pale cheeks were faintly tinged with pink. How lovely she looked! And how charming her whole appearance! Oliver Sinclair walked a little way behind, and regarded her in silence; he who had often accompanied her in her long walks without the slightest embarrassment, now scarcely dared look at her for the wild throbbing of his heart!

As for the brothers, they were positively as radiant as the sun which they begged to have the goodness to set in a cloudless horizon, and to favour them with a sight of its green ray, whilst, between them, they repeated alternate verses of one of Ossian's poems.

"'O thou that rollest above, round as the shield of my fathers! Whence are thy beams, O Sun! thy everlasting light?'"

"'Thou comest forth in thy awful beauty; the stars hide themselves in the sky; the moon, cold and pale, sinks in the western wave; but thou thyself movest alone.'"

"'Who can be a companion of thy course? The oaks of the mountains fall; the mountains themselves decay with years; the ocean shrinks and grows again.'"

"'The moon herself is lost in heaven; but thou art for ever the same, rejoicing in the brightness of thy course.'"

"'When the world is dark with tempests, when thunder rolls and

lightning flies, thou lookest in thy beauty from the clouds, and laughest at the storm.'"

Talking in this enthusiastic strain, they reached the farther end of the heights overlooking the sea. Here they sat down on the rocks, before a perfectly clear horizon.

And this time there was no Aristobulus to bring a sailing-boat in the way, or to raise a flight of sea-birds between Staffa and the setting sun!

As evening came on, the breeze fell, and the waves broke with a gentle plash at the foot of the rocks, the sea was as calm and smooth as a mirror, ruffled only now and then by the lightest breath of wind.

Everything was wonderfully favourable for the observation of the phenomenon.

But behold, half an hour later, Partridge pointing towards the south cried,—

"A sail!"

A sail! Would it once again pass in front of the sun's disk just as it was sinking below the sea? This would indeed have been more than mere ill-luck!

The boat was coming out of the narrow strait between Iona and Mull, and was carried along by the tide rather than the wind, for there was not sufficient breeze to fill her sails.

"It is the *Clorinda*," said Sinclair; "and as she will

make for the other side of Staffa, she will not interfere at all with our view."

It was indeed the *Clorinda*, which, after doubling the southern point of Mull, was making for her moorings in Clam-shell Cove.

All eyes were again turned towards the west. The sun seemed to sink with greater rapidity as it approached the sea; it threw a long trail of dazzling light over the trembling surface of the water; its disk soon changed from a shade of old gold, to fiery red, and, through their half-closed eyes, seemed to glitter with all the varying shades of a kaleidoscope. Faint, waving lines streaked the quivering trail of light cast on the surface of the water, like a spangled mass of glittering gems.

Not the faintest sign of cloud, haze, or mist was visible along the whole of the horizon, which was as clearly defined as a black line traced on white paper.

Motionless, and with intense excitement, they watched the fiery globe as it sank nearer and nearer the horizon, and, for an instant, hung suspended over the abyss. Then, through the refraction of the rays, its disk seemed to change till it looked like an Etruscan vase, with bulging sides, standing on the water. There was no longer any doubt as to the appearance of the phenomenon. Nothing could now interfere with this glorious sunset! Nothing could prevent its last ray from being seen!

The sun was just half way below the horizon, and its powerful rays were shot across the sky like golden arrows; in the distance the cliffs of Mull and the summit of Ben More were bathed in brilliant, purple light.

At last only a faint rim of gold skimmed the surface of the sea.

"The Green Ray! the Green Ray!" cried in one breath the brothers, Dame Bess and Partridge, whose eyes for one second had revelled in the incomparable tint of liquid jade.

Oliver and Helena alone had missed the phenomenon which had at last appeared after so many fruitless observations.

Just as the sun was shooting its last ray into space their eyes met, and all else was forgotten in that glance!

But Helena had caught the black ray, shining from the young man's eyes, and Oliver the blue ray beaming from hers!

The sun had gone down, and neither Oliver nor Helena had seen the Green Ray.



Neither Oliver nor Helena had seen the Green Ray.

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CHAPTER XXIII.

CONCLUSION.

THE following day, the 12th of September, the *Clorinda*, with the whole party on board, set sail with a calm sea and favourable breeze, making for the south-west of the Hebrides, and soon Staffa, Iona, and the point of Mull disappeared behind the high cliffs of that island.

After a pleasant trip, the passengers of the yacht were landed in the little harbour of Oban; then by rail from Oban to Dunolly, and from Dunolly to Glasgow, across the most picturesque country in the Highlands, they returned to Helensburgh.

Three weeks later, a marriage was celebrated with great ceremony at St. George's, Glasgow, but it must be confessed it was not that of Aristobulus Ursiclos with Miss Campbell, and although the bridegroom happened to be Oliver Sinclair, the uncles appeared no less satisfied than their niece.

That this union, contracted under such peculiar circumstances, was a particularly happy one, it is needless to say. Helensburgh, Glasgow, nay even the whole world could scarcely hold all the happiness which had nevertheless been contained in Fingal's Cave.

Although Oliver Sinclair had not seen the much-sought-after phenomenon, he was determined to have a souvenir of the last evening spent on Staffa. So one day he exhibited a remarkably fine sunset, in which a particular effect of a green ray of extreme intensity, as though it had been painted with liquid emerald, was very much admired.

This picture aroused at the same time admiration and discussion, some said it was a natural effect marvellously reproduced, others maintained that it was purely imaginative and that nature could never produce such an effect, to the great indignation of both brothers, who had seen this ray, and declared that the young artist was quite correct.

"And it is even better," said Sam, "to see the Green Ray in a painting—"

"Than in nature," added Sib, "for looking at so many sunsets, one after the other, does the eyesight no good."

And the brothers were right.

Two months after this, the newly-married couple and their uncles were walking in the park on the banks

of the Clyde, when they unexpectedly came upon Aristobulus Ursiclos.

The young savant, who was taking great interest in the work of dragging the river, was going towards the station of Helensburgh when he saw his old Oban companions.

To say that Aristobulus had suffered by Miss Campbell's desertion of him, would be to entirely misunderstand his character. He felt not the slightest embarrassment before Mistress Sinclair.

They bowed to each other, and Aristobulus politely congratulated the newly-married pair.

Seeing this friendly feeling, the brothers could not conceal the happiness which this marriage had given them.

"Such happiness," said Sam, "that sometimes when I am alone I find myself smiling."

"And I weeping," said Sib.

"Well, gentlemen," remarked Aristobulus, "it must be allowed that this is the first time you have ever disagreed; one of you smiles, and the other weeps."

"It is exactly the same thing," interposed Sinclair.

"Exactly," repeated his young wife, taking each uncle by the hand.

"How can that be?" replied Aristobulus, in his usual tone of superiority, "No! no! not at all! What is a

smile? A voluntary and particular movement of the muscles of the face, whilst tears—"

"And tears?" asked Mistress Sinclair.

"Are simply a humour which lubricates the eye-ball, a composition of chloride of sodium, phosphate of chalk, and chlorate of soda!"

"Speaking chemically, sir, you are right," said Oliver Sinclair, "but chemically only."

"I don't understand the distinction," sharply retorted Aristobulus.

And bowing with the rigidity of a geometrician, he resumed his way to the station, with measured steps.

"Mr. Ursiclos would explain sentiment on the same principle as he accounted for the Green Ray," observed Mistress Sinclair.

"But after all, my dear Helena," said Oliver, "we never saw that ray, much as we wished to."

"We have seen something better still!" quietly replied his young wife. "We have seen the happiness which the legend attached to the observation of that phenomenon! And since we have found it, my dear Oliver, let us be contented, and leave to those who have never yet known it, the search for the Green Ray!"

THE END.

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